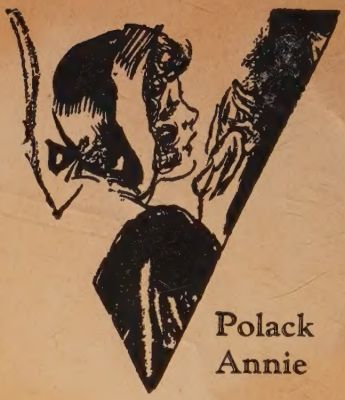
GANGSTER GIRL

JACK LAIT

Polack Annie

Her Arrest Gave Chicago A Nightmare!

When the police took Polack Annie, underworld beauty, and held her for the murder of Kinky King, gang leader, and legal means of getting her free failed, then Goldie Gorio personally directed a carefully planned campaign of action which was climaxed by a raid on Chicago's police headquarters. Gangsters crippled the power house lighting the business district, jammed the main generator and threw the "Loop" into darkness. Thousands had to leave the theatres in darkness and hoodlumism broke out in the streets. Chicago still had the shakes when it woke, white and indignant in the morning.



Polack Annie

When a gangster girl falls in love anything might happen!

When Goldie Gorio's gang was wiped out in Chicago, Polack Annie escaped and came to New York where she ruled as queen of the city's racketeers. She held sway with her beauty and shrewd generalship. Amid the fierce hatreds and jealousies of the underworld this flaming-haired gangsters' girl fell in love and once more split gangland open with the minxlike flair of her dramatic personality. This is the story behind the events which stirred the underworld.

Who was this red-haired beauty that a whole city should be victimized for her—and what is the story behind this spectacular outburst? The papers were full of it but it took Jack Lait to get the real story behind it all. Here's the story the papers didn't get.

GANGSTER GIRL

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BY

JACK LAIT

AUTHOR OF

THE BIG HOUSE

PUT ON THE SPOT

ETC.

WITH A REVISED GLOSSARY
OF UNDERWORLD SLANG

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GANGSTER GIRL

A gangster girl breaks the code to save her lover's life

GANGSTER GIRL

CHAPTER I

Polack Annie, who had bumped off the two toughest gorillas in her native town, Chicago, and because of whose deadly red hair and tilted nose and adolescently ripe form more than a dozen gangsters had been chopped down with machine-gun bullets, opened her eyes; she stretched and picked up a French hand-set in Room 800.

"Hello," said she.

"B. B." she heard in her ear.

"Aw-oh-okay-c'mon up."

She smoothed the covers, reached for a cigarette and lit it, sat higher on the pillows, patted and set her flaming crown, and waited.

She heard a key and the door opened. She turned on a phoney smile and a look of welcome.

Toward her came a man of medium height,

well set up. His clothes were tailor made, punctiliously pressed, but of sedate material and pattern. His face was sallow and saffron, but it was singular and not unattractive. His step had authority. He had come in with a key which he was easing back into his pocket.

"H'lo, Annie," he said. "Hope you appreciate this $50-a-day layout."

"Goldie Gorio," answered Annie, "had a mansion."

"Oh—so? He had a high funeral, too."

"He was laid away in a fifty-grand stiff-box an' the flowers was nine carloads."

"He couldn't smell 'em."

"No—but the whole world did . . . listen, Big Boy—you're keepin' me in this here $50-a-day suite becus times is tough in this distric' an' you can rent the cheap rooms, but you got no call for the big-time camps since the market went Democratic. You ain' givin' me no good time. I've slep' on a bare mattress in a joint an' enjoyed it; an' I've kipped in feathers just as ritz as this gingerbread bridal cell. . . . Now that that's that—what's what?"

"Silk" Freeman smiled a smile that was almost a sneer.

"Take a sweet earful o' this, fire-top," he said, as he slid onto a chair. "You're not in Chicago now. You're in New York—my town. I didn' invite you, and this is a bad place to come to if you ain't sent for. You came in here carryin' the banner and singin' the blues. Now, if you don't care for the set-up, toss on the rags and scram. I did copesettee before I met you—I guess I can battle it out after I never glom you again."

Polack Annie took a deep drag on her butt, stomped it out in the porcelain ash tray with "Hotel Napoleon" burnt in it, gulped, held herself in, and said:

"Hey, Big Boy—you got me all cockeyed. I didn' mean——"

"Swell. Then we understand each other. You beat a blowoff in Chi, you breezed in here, you looked me up, I put you up and I put up with you. So, don't talk back to me or talk up to me, because I don' take that stuff from no twist that ever navigated. When you realize who you are, who I am and what it's all about, I'll talk turkey to you. And make it snappy."

Polack Annie bit her red lips. She hadn't stood for much of that sort of conversation in

the second person. But she was down and out, a long way from anywhere, and she wasn't yap enough not to know that Silk Freeman was a big shot.

And he was.

She had been reared in Chicago, the home of the storied gangsters. And the stories were true. But the Chicago outfit were chiselers. Now she was in the nest of the big dough. In Chicago the rackets were run by a bunch of boss hoodlums who had battled up through the ranks by force of fists and guts and gats and typewriters and pineapples. In New York the aces had that kind of rough babies working for them.

Here the leaders, the chiefs were politicians, capitalists, organizers. They sat in silk shirts behind mahogany desks. They let the suckers hustle for them and the trimmers muscle for them, put over the tall orders, slaughter one another and get peanuts for their pay. But they operated from the Adam's apple up. The men who did the slugging and the shooting were a flock of white wings to them.

And of all these, Silk Freeman was the Abou Ben Adhem.

Rising from slum origin, he had been educated on the sidewalks and finished in the poolrooms, gambling joints and speakeasies. Now he was the master racketeer of the proudest metropolis in the world.

Legions slaved for him and slew for him. He owned hotels and theatres and police captains and night clubs and office buildings and judges and Rolls-Royces and a borough president and a bank or two; he was cutting in on legitimate and nefarious enterprises from hand organs to ocean-going liners and from heroin to art works.

He would finance anything from a corner newsstand to a stadium. He was in on the crooked boxing bonanza, fixed races and baseball games in the bag; he controlled a boundless bootlegging system and dope ring and gambling monopolies; he worked with stock swindlers and bond thieves; he was behind the fabulous criminal bail bond trust; and had a municipal franchise for a fleet of omnibuses.

His monicker, "Silk," fitted him like a mantle of that fine delicate, glossy and fibrous substance which first hung about the fat shoulders of that fastidious and fantastic Roman em-

peror, Heliogabalus. Freeman had fibrous qualities of strength, personality and inelasticity, with a sheen and gloss over it all. They tear fangs from rattlesnakes with a silk handkerchief.

His eye was shrewd, yet languorous, and it mirrored the congenital bargaining impulse of his race. His nose was delicate and a bit hawk-like. His lips were thin and bloodless. He rarely smiled and never laughed, and his smile was more feared than his frown.

He was as mysterious as he was notorious. Everybody on Broadway knew him—and nobody knew him anywhere. He hung out in two restaurants, in neither of which he had any financial interest, and had private telephones in each; he could be seen often lounging before a drug store which was no hangout for any of his class, and in Hotel Napoleon (which was his and where he harbored never less than twenty girls—some broke, some mad over him, some so stewed or coked-up they didn't know what town they were in) and in his own armored apartment on Park Avenue, in a building which was his, and where he "hit the stem" and beautiful girls cooked and lit his pill.

For Silk Freeman was a "hop-head." The thrill of the exhilarating poppy had him clutched. Each day at about four o'clock he got the yenyen. When in the spasm of the deep breath from the slender pipe he was shrewder than a railroad president ever was—normal. Then he schemed out his big deals and his broad campaigns. And after that he slept. They say he slept. No one had ever seen him sleep. No one knew when he slept. He was up and about at all hours of the night, and around again too early next morning for his stooges.

He must have had contact with a thousand people every day. Wherever he was, whatever he was doing, strange looking men were pussyfooting in, buzzing in his ear, handing him papers or getting papers from him.

He kept an office in one of his big skyscrapers. There bookkeepers tallied figures, secretaries answered calls and talked in the lingo of the runaround of trade. The names on the door were blinds. The Big Boy, as they called him (and it was abbreviated to B. B.) rarely came there. His day wasn't long enough. And when he added the night to it, there still wasn't time to live the lives he had pyramided for himself.

His office was in his hat. His hat cost $25. And it sat on a $25,000,000 head. The head had sandy hair, the kind that would never grow gray.

He didn't know what he was worth. As long as he could dodge the inevitable assassination which must be his finish, he was a rich man. When that would come, many of his assets would die with him, for there was no other man who could juggle Silk Freeman's playthings and keep them off the ground. He had neither wife nor child to get rich for. He just couldn't help it. He was a gambler in his heart and a loanshark in his soul.

He was no coward. True, he carried two body-guards. He had earned them. He had double-crossed the world. He had welched on all his debts, straight or crooked; he had put the hah-hah on his every pledge and promise and obligation, figuring that a man who served a sense of honor was a man who was afraid to disown it. He had taken whatever came his way or whatever and whomsoever he could meet on his way—and his pockets went one way. He was one wise wire, and the rest of humanity

was made up of clucks and chumps who could be bought, licked, out-guessed or knocked off. It was his America.

And his America stood for it.

So Polack Annie knew. She was under his hospitality, in his custody and at his mercy. An orphan, a fugitive, an unwed widow and a derelict, she had beat Chicago. "Secretary" Gleason and his triumphant mob of murderers, finding out that she had blasted Kinky King, their chieftain, with the Edgewater Kid's gold automatic, had taken her for a ride—but she had made a miraculous getaway.

Silk had been Goldie's New York connection in some of the national networks of booze manipulating. She didn't tell him that it was she who had blown Goldie's belly out with his own gilded gats. It was half likely a hep party like Freeman knew it. Anyway——

She had limped in flat. B. B. had given her hostage, hospice and sanctuary. He had given her the needs of existence and more. She could sign for whatever her stomach craved or her heart okayed. So far he hadn't demanded a thing. She had no illusions about any al-

truistic motives of Silk Freeman. She had no need to have. She could have written next week in her sleep.

And there he was, seated beside her bed, looking at her as only he could look at anyone. She drew her folded hands up her silken shins to hug her knees, cased in pajamas. Polack Annie was no sophomore, herself.

"Right, B. B.," she said. "Now what's the orders, the instructions—or the proposition?"

"Well! Just a broad after all . . . I'll give you the orders in a minute. The instructions go with 'em. The proposition—that'll come later. Now, get me right. I like you. That is I like you as much as I can like anybody I like. But you have to work. I've got a racket all lined up for you."

"Is it juicy?"

"Juicy? It's gooey!"

The telephone rang.

The bluff bows of the deep-boweled launch gently pushed aside the muggy, milky fog that clung to the waters of New York Bay. Now and again the motor shot a shiver through the beams of the big, black, bulky hulk. It was

night, moonless, and the craft was running without lights. Fog-horns and warning booms from the other river-vessels tore the thick air. In the pilot house stood two men with binoculars glued to their eyes.

The converted chandler's boat carried in its guts a strange cargo. Huddled there were 12 yellow, masked, frightened Chinese, taken off a freighter from Halifax at the 12-mile limit. A contraband cargo smuggled in to be vomited into New York, C. O. D., at $1,000 a head, the money to be paid by relatives, employers, friends. A dozen like so many more of the millions of Mongolians in the big cities, to shuffle through the narrow streets of Chinatown, crowd into beehive dormitories and opium dives, labor in laundries, chop suey places, on truck farms; to join lawless tongs, kill, steal and ravish—illegitimate intruders, unwanted at home, unwanted here.

To the crew and the ruffians who sat on deck these creatures were like pigs. If a "rap" threatened, and this was a Federal offense, hard to square or beat, the "monkeys" would be jettisoned without hesitation. They were worth $12,000 landed alive. But——

Suddenly two shrill blasts, answering a signal from the pilot house. It meant trouble to port. In an instant ten burlies rushed the hold.

A government cutter was chasing. Rat-a-tat came machine-gun fire, 125 bullets to the minute.

The gangsters all had "saps" in their hands, blackjacks. They came at the huddled Chinks and smashed them over their heads, again and again. There was chaotic wailing and jabbering—and then silence except the oaths of the hoodlums and the socks of their saps. They picked up the limp forms, carried them one and two at a time and dumped them into the water.

The motor had stopped. The cutter drew up. Uniformed coast guards boarded. They went through the whole craft. Nothing contraband was found. The coast guards snickered. They knew something.

The telephone bell in eight-o-o, Hotel Napoleon, rang. Annie answered. "B. B.—oh, yes —right here."

"Yeh," said Silk Freeman. "How? You would, you fumble-fingered fool."

And he slammed the instrument down.

"We lost a cargo last night," said Silk.

"Cargo?" she queried. "Rubber, hootch, grain, autos or——"

"Monkeys! One of my op'rations. We ease them mustards in at a grand a head. We had a dozen. We got a chase and the boys knocked 'em on the noodle and chucked 'em in the drink."

Polack Annie, Chicago graduate, drew deeply.

"Gawd," she breathed. "They're only Chinks—but, yellow or white, that's pretty hard-boiled. I've seen plenty an' done plenty an' went through plenty in Chicago. But this turns my stomach."

"It don' give me any appetite," chimed in Freeman.

"After all, they're human. Oh, my Lord—twelve human souls sent to kingdom come—gone——"

"Twelve what? Human souls gone? Twelve human souls, hell—twelve grand!"

CHAPTER II

"Now," said Silk Freeman, as he sat at the edge of Polack Annie's bed in his Hotel Napoleon, "we'll get down to cases. I've got a new racket all lined up for you. You're goin' to organize the beauty shops."

Annie tried to take it seriously. Then she smiled.

"Beauty shops?" she gurgled. "I come from Chicago."

"From Chicago is correct. Beauty shops is what you'll organize. I know what's whosis. You know how many beauty shops there are in New York? Huh? More than 2,000 in the black—makin' money. And not kickin' in a nickel. It's a sin."

"Well? Did you help 'em get prosperous?"

"No. But I'll show you—and them—how I can help them make 25 per cent more, pay their girls 15 per cent more, and give me 10 per cent of their business and 10 per cent of what the girls rake-off."

"I've heard o' shakedowns, but I never knew they were in the name o' charity."

"Oh, we run those, too. Just now I'm educating the owners of the miniature golf courses —$50 a week for patrol service so their links won' be destroyed by vandals during the late night hours. We had to blow up one of 'em, and the rest were waitin' on the doorstep next day. But this is strictly legit. That is, if they come in—and they will. We may have to strongarm a few who won't listen to reason and can't understand mathematics, but everything in life can't be just fun. Now, listen:

"You start with the girls. There are about 6,000 hair-dressers employed in the town. They pull down 35 per cent of their take. We start the Hair-dressers' Union. We call a meeting. Most of 'em will come—and come in. If some don't, well they won't have good health. After the first lesson, we'll have a 100 per cent union. Now we lay down the law. The girls must have 45 per cent instead of 35.

"The madames will squawk. They can't afford it. Oh, can't they? Well, they must raise the price of a permanent from $8 to $12 —or whatever is customary, a 50 per cent up.

'Ah,' says the madame, 'but I can't. My competitors will get all my business.' 'Oh, will they?' you ask. 'We'll see your competitors. They'll raise 50 per cent or else.' 'Or else what?' 'Or else they won't be competitors long.' Do I make myself clear?

"The girls, who now make 45 per cent of $12 instead of 35 per cent of $8, pay 10 per cent of their gross to the union for dues—and a defense fund and for educational purposes.

"The madames, who now have 55 per cent of $12 a head instead of 65 per cent of $8 a head, contribute 10 per cent of their gross to our new organization, the Beauty Shop Proprietors' Protective Association. That's us.

"We protect our girls by making it hard for new ones to get in the trade. We protect our proprietors by making it harder for outsiders to open up new shops. If a landlord raises the rent on one of our wards, we send a couple of the boys to see him. And he's seen pretty.

"You laughed when I said organize the beauty shops, huh? Well, as near as I can figure this gag, it'll be worth three-quarters of a million a year. And everybody in it will be better off. And the sap dames who get their

hair phoneyed up pay the bad news. That's business. That's the way the legit combines operate. It's called 'lessening sales resistance' or 'syndicate for furthering mutual benefits of trade,' or 'organizing for the betterment of the industry.'

"Union labor in this country invented and fathered the system. Carpenters used to get $36 a week. Now they get $72. They organized. They made the employers meet their demands. The employers battled. There were some sluggings, shootings, tie-ups—and the employers got wise. They gave in and raised the prices. So they had peace and prosperity, and the public paid and the help got twice as much and were happy. But—the carpenters didn't copyright the idea.

"The plumbers did the same thing—and the teamsters and the cooks and the toothpick sharpeners and the window cleaners and the painters and the stevedores and the sandwich men. And up went the price on everything. And the carpenters were getting as much for their $72 as they had been for their $36. And a little less. Because in each operation somebody hung on a little premium for his own en-

deavors—'organization and incorporation expense,' it's called.

"And I'm in that line of industry, among other things."

Polack Annie looked at him wide-eyed.

"B. B.," she said, "I thought I knew something about rackets where I head in from. But our mobs are hobnailed hoodlums. They work with gats and you work with a fountain pen."

"Ah, yeh—but always with the shadow of the gat in the background. Remember, all this folds up and flops if we haven't got the power when it's called for. And not only that kind of power—political power: permits, licenses, justice, privileges, protection, destruction. Not every buck we take in is velvet. There's plenty divvy—plenty. I've got as many heelers as I've got heels on my payroll.

"We can't fight city hall—unless we have to. But we don't have to. Those babies drawing $2,800 a year and going at a rate of that a month must live, too. They pay more than they'll get their whole stretch in office to get the office. They start in on the cuff, in the red and in hock. And they're good and hungry.

"In your town they deal along the same angles. But they shoot for rolls of nickels and we shoot the roll. Millions!

"I'll organize the banks when I get around to it.

"They can be handled the same way as any other outfit. They're human. The world is made up of people with larceny in their hearts. That's the only one element in mankind that's eternal and universal. Morals differ with climate and age; what's regarded as brave in war is cowardly in money matters; millions worship different gods: no two races agree on ethics or manners or human relations. But they're all brothers under the skin on one thing—they're all out for all they can get. So why should I devote my genius to workin' with small sectors of mankind and doubtful psychology, when I can muscle in on the one main motivatin' impulse of everybody everywhere?

"When you dug me up here, Annie, you walked in on no sucker. I had a rough, tough childhood. My parents were poor, ignorant immigrants. I was a sensitive, bashful kid. I got kicked and slammed on all sides. I might have turned out to be a poet. But they wouldn'

let me. They hardened me up and made me bitter. Now they'll pay—and they'll like it. I've got them in my mitt before they wake up. And if they try to wiggle out, I'll sock 'em with that mitt and they'll never wake up again.

"They'll pay off for what they done to the little Freeman kid!"

Polack Annie smiled.

"I was yanked up the same way," she said. "All I owe the world is a good beating."

"Stick with me, red-head. Beating the world is my racket."

CHAPTER III

On Park Avenue, Silk Freeman owned an apartment building. And on one of the upper floors, the whole of which he held out, was his pet hide-away. There he smoked his opium pipe every afternoon. There was his sanctum sanctorum. Even his most intimate lieutenants couldn't crash the armored door. Here he had priceless privacy.

The doormen were gunmen. The elevator men were gunmen. Inside the apartment an ex-convict served night and day as his valet, his chef, his Friday. The apartment had no windows. No neighbors ever smelled the aroma of the fresh poppy in its opulent odor or the aftermath of stale hop. Ventilation was by cornucopias belling outward to the free air.

When Silk Freeman came home, in a roll-top desk that didn't even have a lock on it, were bundles of bills—banknotes—currency; grands, half-grands, C-notes—thousands and thousands of dollars' worth. He would spend hours writ-

ing out deposit slips. The money came in all day long. The men who paid it in attached little memoranda to sheaves. They never even saw the face of the man they gave the plunder to. But never a dollar went astray in transit.

Freeman's two body-guards slept there, too. They came with him and went with him. They were never far away when as the Broadway lights began to twinkle he would loll before Brown's drug store, in the rear of which he had a suppressed telephone. They never took their eyes off him. He never packed a gun. No punk copper or over-ambitious assistant district attorney would ever give him a bum fall like they slipped Al Capone in Philly. Even when Silk Freeman owned judges and bulls, he didn't trust them.

He ran more big-time rackets in his head than all the rest of the metropolis put together. He was sure of himself. He could "lay the hip" every afternoon and float on the wings of the poppy, and he could be keener than bankers who wouldn't have lit a cigarette. He made men do what he wanted and he made women do as he pleased.

And yet on this day, Silk Freeman didn't have himself under control.

In their graves in Chicago, Kinky King and Goldie Gorio could have told him first-hand and fourteen other tough guys, not the least of them the Edgewater Kid—the only love of Polack Annie's red-headed and red-blooded life—could have told him. But, wise as Silk Freeman was, he didn't quite yet have the answer.

He did. But he tried to laugh it off. . . . In love? Silk Freeman—in love? This man who would cut your guts out and count 'em up like pinochle cards—in love? Preposterous.

But—was it? With the million-and-one matters he had to occupy him, his mind kept wandering back to Room 800, Hotel Napoleon. And what and who was there? A crimson-crowned tramp from Chicago who had eased in on him out of nowhere. She had talked up to him. She had played hard to get. He wasn't used to that. Who in hell was this broad that she should distract the perfectly orientated noodle of Silk Freeman? Who was she?

Never mind. She was in Room 800. And

he couldn't drive that out of his famous skull . . . was he hooked? Silk Freeman! . . . Oh, it wasn't in the deck. But, then, why——

He strolled into Brown's, back to his 'phone, and called the number. Annie was there—because she had no other place to go. She recognized the voice.

"I'll be there in a few minutes, fire-top," he said.

"I'll be in," she answered.

"Pretty up. We're goin' steppin'."

"I haven't got much in the way o' clothes. Where I came from, the men treat their babies pretty, but they don' take 'em shoppin' much. I'd disgrace you."

"Downstairs is a dress joint—it's run by a blister named Imogene. I'll give her a buzz. Go down an' say Silk sent you. She'll fit you out like Peggy Hopkins. And when I get there, look like Mrs. Astor's pet pup. I'll go home and tux up."

"Imogene will hear from me," said Annie. "I'll be there like a plush pony."

"So will Silk. Hop to it."

Freeman walked in on Annie. She was

radiant in a light-blue semi-gown, long behind, nothing much in front, very little up in the back. Her fiery hair looked like Nero's blow-out. Her lips were rouged, her cheeks were pinked, her lashes were mascaraed, her dimples were deepened.

Silk Freeman had seen a few girls. He owned night-clubs and girl shows; he had been raised in the ghetto, where half the professional beauties of America spring from; he was a connoisseur of females.

He had heard this Polack Annie was poison. But he had heard that about a flock of twists. Now, when he blinked the eyes of his dead-pan poker face, he felt something akin to the kick of the third drag on the "stem." She was a wow, this gun-moll from the sticks. How had they held her that long in Chi?

"You look the real McCoy, Annie," he said.

"I feel lousy," she replied.

"What's the matter? Not getting enough attention?"

"Oh, I ain' lookin' for attention. I haven't got any comin' to me, I guess. But I feel so strange here—so far away from everybody an' everything—oh, not that I got anybody or any-

thing—no place—but I jus' feel like a vag—so unnecessary an' so——"

"Oh, bottle that in your good-lookin' mush. You miss those penny-ante punks you thought were big shots in Chi. You're in the big league now, red-head. What they took down is tips to waiters here. You're with Silk—Silk Freeman—'B. B.'—and he kind of craves your comp'ny. Now, what are you torchin' over? I know a hundred broads right now'd give their souls for your spot. You came, I saw, you conquered. Another big baby pulled somethin' like that line—Julius Caesar. He was good, too. . . . How about a bottle o' grape?"

Polack Annie looked him over shrewdly through half-open eyes. He was not drunk. He was vociferous, fulsome, but sober. She had heard that he went for the pipe. But she had known many who had the yenyen. Freeman wasn't floating. He was—Annie's heart sank; he was "stuck." She had gone up against that all her life. She exercised that effect on men. From tipsy teamsters to the top shots of Chicago's underworld, they had given her the chase and the work. The Edge-

water Kid she had loved—King and Gorio she had bumped off—even the chief of police had propositioned her.

Polack Annie had no morals. But she could get gooseflesh, like any other human being. What was this curse that hung over her? She had come to this amazing man to get by and go through. And here and now he was——

Annie popped little dabs of perfume at strategic points.

"Are we goin' out?" she asked. "I haven't seen much o' this here famous burg . . . by the way, you don' look bad in that tux. If you inquire discreetly, I'm good an' hungry. Let's knock off that quart o' wine an' lam it for a menu. Do I order?"

"Yeh. Pick up that 'phone and ask for Emil. Say B. B. wants the Krug—no magnesia—the Krug! Say I said to step on it."

Annie called and the service was nothing to squawk about. They lapped up the vintage in fragile, hollow-stemmed shells.

"Annie," said Silk, "you make me feel like no other skirt ever did."

"That's your hard luck," retorted Annie. "Lemme fill up your glass."

"No, oh, okay, fill it—but listen: janes are no novelty in my life. But I'm that way over you in a big way. Does that burn you up?"

Annie turned away for a second. She saw the sleek-haired Edgewater Kid—as she had first seen him in the Devil's Hall, all youth and animation, and as she had last seen him in the coffin, all waxy and embalmed, with the typewriter-bullet holes all covered by a decent black suit and no visible sign that he had been put on the spot.

"Did you say we was goin' out to eat?" she asked, pointedly.

"Sure," said Silk. "We're goin' out—to eat —an' how——"

"Well, let's be on our way," said Annie. "Where do we do this?"

"To my apartment—after we have dinner at the Casino . . . pull on the little hat, firetop . . . this is goin' to be a party."

Polack Annie hesitated. Then, lackadaisically, she slid on her silver toque like sliding the skin over a sausage. The effect against her hair and coloring was glorious.

"Oh—okay?" she agreed. "Do we breeze?"

"What do you mean, breeze?" demanded

Silk Freeman. "You're goin' to my dump."

"Well, I'm goin'—what more do you want?"

"I'll let you know when we get there."

"Maybe I can guess. Anyway, Big Boy, I'm movin' on my own power. Let's lam."

Silk Freeman fumbled for his hat.

"You said it, red-head," he chuckled. "You'll date the rest o' your life from this moment."

CHAPTER IV

THE Hispano-Suiza drew up to the door like a slinking snake—quiet, sure of itself, long, yellow and black, and slithery.

The lackadaisical doorman, hard-boiled to costly cars, twisted the silver-plated handle and yanked open the door. A man was helping a girl out. The girl had red hair and a silver-cloth toque. All this was routine with the hard-boiled doorman. Then he saw the man. He stiffened as though mercury had shot up his spine like it would up the tube of a thermometer. It was the Big Boy—Silk Freeman—B. B. The doorman blithered and blubbered.

Silk Freeman took the elbow of Polack Annie between his thumb and finger and guided her up the few steps. A head-waiter saw him, raised a hand and led the way. If he didn't value his job, he did value the contour of his pan. A small table was hurriedly pushed out on the floor, in front of the "ringside" locations. B. B. was in the house!

A slender, sleek, anaemic man crossed the floor. He was manager of the resort, which had a municipal concession, which charged four prices and which paid the rent of a peanut-stand for a palace on public property. He bowed obsequiously.

"Bottle o' wine," said Silk. "And a menu."

"On the fire," said the major domo. "You don't want a menu—write your ticket, Mr. Freeman. We have some especially fine sweetbreads——"

"Boloney," said Silk. "I'll have a Hamburger steak, extra well done, smothered in onions. . . . Annie, what's your heart's desire?"

"I could go in a big way for some roast beef —outside cut if it isn't charred—baked potato an' new green peas. Could it be handled?"

"Consider it delivered, miss," said the manager. "The wine is on the way."

"You get service," commented Annie. "I guess you're no stranger in this burg."

"I get by," assented Silk.

Tommy Gillespie sat across the room. He was the son of Tall Tom Gillespie, teaming con-

tractor, Tammany leader, self-made millionaire.

Tommy had just turned out at college, where he had played tackle on his team and had been prominently named on the All-American. A husky, handsome kid was Tommy. The Irish of his nativity was in his blue eyes and his yellowish, thick, tawny hair—and his brawny shoulders and his undershot jaw.

Beside him sat Alice Schuyder. Her face was narrow and aristocratic. Her forebears had been Hollanders. They had bought acreage on Manhattan Island to raise cows on, and it had turned out to be front-footage to build banks on. She was a snob in her heart and she snubbed everything on earth except Tommy Gillespie. Him she loved—if she could love.

Their waiter was hovering around, brushing off crumbs, filling water goblets. He sensed the commotion across the room. He glanced across.

"Know who that man is, Mr. Gillespie?" he inquired gingerly, as though fearsome that his impertinence might be misjudged, yet feeling that the occasion demanded expression.

"No," said Tommy. "Who'd he ever kill?"

"Nobody knows—and if anybody does, he won't tell. That's Silk Freeman."

Tommy whistled.

"Oh—yes? So that's the Big Boy, eh?"

"That's Silk Freeman, sir. He doesn't come here often, and——"

"Who," said Tommy, "is the red-headed girl?"

Alice shot him a look. The waiter caught it.

"Who is she?" repeated Tommy.

"I—I don't know, Mr. Gillespie. She's new to me. I see most of them, sir, but I've never caught that one before."

"H'm—very interesting looking girl, I should say——"

"Very coarse—dressed in atrocious taste," volunteered Alice.

"I think she's a knockout," said Tommy. "How do those thugs and yeggs get that kind of women?"

The waiter shrugged his shoulders.

"If you saw what I see, sir, you would think human nature a most amazing proposition. Old men get young girls, young men get—or are gotten by—oh, Mr. Gillespie, working in a place

like this is a highly eye-opening education. But they tell me this Freeman is rather intriguing, they tell me——"

"I think he's horrible," cut in Miss Schuyder. "He has the face of a criminal."

"Yes, miss," assented the waiter. "He has been accused of questionable practices. He is the head of all the gangsters and racketeers in New York. They tell all sorts of stories about him——"

"If that girl's hair is natural, it's the most devastating red I've ever seen," said Tommy.

"Indeed?" observed Alice quietly. "It seems to have hit you rather hard."

"Don't be silly, Alice. But—it is extraordinary hair."

"It certainly is," clicked Alice, as she brought her teeth together. "Would you mind settling up and taking me home? I have the most excruciating headache!"

"Waiter—check," ordered Tommy Gillespie.

"Annie," said Silk Freeman, "I'm used to a flock of attention whenever I go wherever I go. But I never got so much concentrated int'rest as I'm drawin' right now. Could it

possibly be because you're the prettiest thing that ever toddled?"

"Behave, B. B.," gurgled Annie. "You're just tryin' to be nice. I'm on'y a small-time broad from the tanks. The idea o' my puttin' the spot on Silk Freeman!"

"Listen, fire-top: you put the spot on me an' you put good men on the spot. Gee, with your looks an' my brains——"

"Okay—let's go in business."

"We are in business. I'll never let you get away from me, Annie. I—I—look at me, you beautiful kid—look at me—look at Silk Freeman, the big shot—look good—look in my eyes —what do you see there?"

Polack Annie drew deeply on her cigarette. It was all she had feared. She didn't have to look into those gun-metal eyes. She had put up with this stuff all of her life. Once she had been in love and it had been gorgeous—and tragic. Every other time it had been a pain. And this man—she couldn't help admiring him—he was the last word in her world—wanted her!

She wasn't proud. She wasn't glad. It meant that she had to give in and give up again.

She was no weakling. She had bumped off the two toughest gorillas in Chicago, the roughest town on earth. She had been the cause of causing more than a dozen other hard men to go to Hell. She had paid off—pretty. Why did men still see her only as a female?

And here was the Big Boy, himself, leering at her, flushed with champagne and paying her boobish compliments. How silly.

It was just too bad.

The waiter laid a check on the table, face down.

Silk Freeman signed it without turning it over. He laid a $10 bill beside it.

"C'mon," he hoarsed, thickly, "we'll breeze to my joint . . . the wine here is lousy—I know, becus they buy it from me. We'll go home where we can get the stuff they can't buy at all. Vintage! Too precious to peddle. C'mon."

Polack Annie sighed.

It was palpable—Freeman had a champagne edge on. And when a hop-head gets stewed, he's wicked.

"Sure," she said. "Oh—sure. That'll be dandy."

Silk Freeman caught something of the spirit of her words.

"Oh—no?" he sneered. "If it isn't dandy, it'll be just a night wasted. An' since you got nothin' to do an' nowhere to go an' nobody to see, what the hell is the squawk about, redhead?"

"Who's squawkin'?" asked Polack Annie.

"You! You brainless broad, playin' hard to land with me—with Silk Freeman—I'll knock you forty feet out from under that funny little hat that I paid for. You ain't in Chicago now, you punk. You're in New York. An' you're with me—with me! Get that straight an' don't forget it. Now come along—an' smile. If you don't like it, make believe you do. In this burg they think Silk Freeman is a king. Act like it. Get me?"

"I got you," Annie surrendered, reaching for her gloves.

"Sure you got me," said Silk, sulkily. "Look out I don't get you . . . let's go."

"I'm goin'," said Annie. "I'm goin'."

"You're doggone tootin' you're goin'—you're goin' to my flat—come on, darling, go with Silky or he'll knock you stiff—pick it up an' navigate—Mr. Freeman speaking."

"All right—all right," said Annie, weakly. "Did I say no?"

"You said yes—the only party around me what ever says no—is me!"

CHAPTER V

Tall Tom Gillespie had gone through enough to entitle himself to the claim that he was a man.

He had landed in Castle Garden, an Irish immigrant kid. He had looked for the gold they had said was in the streets—all he had found was mud. He was the oldest of thirteen children and the dirt-floored hut had been just big enough for the next dozen, the parents and the pigs. So he had been pushed out. He had six or eight kinsmen in New York. But they were all traveling out of the same station. He was still too young to be a policeman. So he got a job driving a wagon.

From that start, reins in hand, Tall Tom became the owner of the wagon, another one, the stable, more stables; and by the time motor trucking came in, he was a Tammany leader, a rich man, the husband of Nora Quinn, and the father of a boy. He didn't care any more for

that son than he did for both his eyes. His sentiment for Tommy went double.

He still drove with reins in his hand. Tom Gillespie was born a leader—whether of Tammany or the penniless tenant farmers of his country, or a South Sea island, if he landed there.

He had come up through the competition of New York money-making and the dirt and shenanigan and intrigue of Manhattan politics. And his word was currency and his promise was security.

Now he had lived to see his boy, the son of the son of the son of an impoverished Irish farmer who had scrabbled for a living on a flinty four-acre patch of worthless soil, a Yale graduate, a celebrity, a wholesome and handsome youngster with brains, body and bulldog in his make-up.

When Silk Freeman's Hispano-Suiza drew up to the door of his Park Avenue apartment house, wherein on the eighth floor he had his hide-away, his sanctum and his hop-nest, the uniformed doorman, who packed a gat under his ornate harness, and who looked as smart

as any door opener on the street, bent toward the Big Shot and whispered:

"Biff—Glasson—in the lobby." Freeman didn't answer him. He just guided Polack Annie toward the door and followed her in. He addressed the elevator man, who had an automatic in his armpit, too, and said out of the side of his mouth:

"Take the lady up—get her in—I'll be right along."

The elevator man guided Annie toward the lighted lift. He slid the door back at the eighth, knocked on the metal portal opposite with just such a succession of taps, and the door opened.

Annie saw a bent, aged man. He didn't see her—much. He never raised his eyes, surely not his head. He waved toward a roomy chair. Annie slumped into its hospitable embrace.

"May I serve you a drink?" asked the servant.

Annie smiled.

"Scotch—straight, old timer." She answered. "You've done a bit in stir. How's YOUR folks?"

"Yes, ma'am," he replied, and shuffled out for the liquor.

Annie's eyes roved. She saw a windowless room. The furnishings were antiques. The carpets were high and thick and furry. Everything had solidity and substantiality.

So—this was the retreat—the home—of Silk Freeman, the Big Shot!

To this fastness he had brought her, Polack Annie!

The servant sing-songed in with the Scotch. Annie threw it down. It burned. It burned good.

"Get this, Chief," Glasson was saying, downstairs. "I've piped off this Gillespie set-up. He's hooked in wit' Tamm'ny an' he's no push-over. But he can be tooken. The dough he's knockin' off is a crime. If we can muscle in on dat river-front stevedorin'-truckin' outfit, B. B., we're ridin' high, wide an' handsome, I'm for givin' it a twirl."

"Oh—you are? Where do you get that 'we' stuff? Since when you got pleurisy? Who slipped you the lowdown on it in the firs' place? Sure we can cut in there. Gillespie is one o' the white-haired boys. But I never was stopped

becus somethin' I went after was hard to get—women, rackets, dough, ins, a goof's wife or a guy's life—what the hell is the fun o' goin' after what's in the bag all the time?

"I saw this Gillespie's kid t'night. He was glommin' Annie—I mean a flamin' broad I had with me . . . and he knew who I was—I know the waiter was givin' him the office. He lamped her like a college punk would. He burnt up the twist he was with—one o' the Schuyders, and they're certified checks . . . that was just an accident. I don't hold it against the kid—he's a mick and a hick—but, somehow, it was a challenge, at that. And I don't like it. Hear me? I don't like it."

"Okay, Chief—if you don't like it, I don't like it."

"I didn' ask you to like it or not like it. Follow that Gillespie gag through. He's been in business fifty years. He's tough to take—oh, yeh? He's cleanin' up. He works through a flock o' tough teamios and has a deal on with the dock rasslers. This is been comin' to him for a long time. I don' know what's delayed it. He got rich at it, didn't he? And we never got a quarter out of it. If we let things go on

this way, there'll be no holdin' these vested business men. Everyone of 'em has an angle. Don't think diff'rent, Biff—this is a republic. There's nothin' on the level. They got combines, connections, strongarm works an' the power o' the press, usually.

"In our game we can't advertise. I wish I could. I can make any outfit eat it an' love it, excep' the newspapers. I don' mean they shade for you becus you buy space. But I guess the damn saps read their own sheets an' believe it. I'm big business. But you think I ever get respect? Think I ever get a dignified interview? No. See this ear? See this ear—whiter'n the other one? I got that frozen one night—standin' in a frost in front o' this here buildin', which I was buildin'—improvin' the locality, raisin' rents, just a creator o' values, an' up-builders o' property. I stood an' stood. I was waitin' for a reporter to come by an' ask: 'Mr. Freeman, how much does this investment represent? What inspired you to knock down four shanties an' erect a magnificent residence structure?' But none came.

"No—none . . . but if a hoodlum shoots his jane or a pineapple is flung in a guinea bar-

ber shop, the news-hounds are draggin' me out of bed: 'What do you know about this, B. B.?' —'Can you tip us off on that, B. B.?'

"Tall Tom Gillespie owns trucks, huh? They have tires an' bodies an' engines an' good will an' background—an' inflooence an' power—have they? Well, Silk Freeman is Tall Tom Gillespie's partner, or Tom retires an' Silk Freeman owns it all. Is that clear? Is that enough?"

"Plenty, Chief," assented Glasson.

"Okay—now I'm goin' upstairs. I got a scarlet woman—scarlet above the ears, anyway. You take care o' that Gillespie turkey. I'll go up an' talk turkey to my—my guest . . . you never were in the boss truckin' business, Biff, were you?"

"No. Chief—I never was," answered Glasson.

"Well—you are now. Scram."

"Okay, on the job. I'll ring you about—say ten?"

"Ten? Biff—you never saw this red-head. Call me at two!"

CHAPTER VI

Polack Annie heard the key glide oililly in the keyhole. Silk Freeman's Park Avenue apartment had turned rather chill. He had sent her up the elevator and the ex-con servant had served her a shot of Scotch. She wasn't hectic for his arrival. But she felt chilly. The key in the lock was rather a relief.

B. B. it was, who entered. He threw his black soft tux hat somewhere and came into the room on the peaks of the stiff carpet.

"Hey, there, red-head," he called. "Did you get a shot?"

"I got a big shot."

"You bet you got a big shot. You got Silk Freeman . . . sorry to have held you up—I was layin' out a deal downstairs—we're goin' in the transportation business."

"That's swell . . . by the way, B. B., when we were havin' dinner, across the room was a boy—a blondish, square-shouldered kid—did you give him a tumble?"

"Was he with a dark, skinny-faced twist?"

"Yeh. Do you by any chance know who he was?"

"I ain' takin' any chance, I knew who he was. It's him I'm goin' in the truckin' business with."

"Now—aw, behave—he didn' know you——"

"But he sure overlooked nothin' about you. He just come out o' college. You're the only post-graduate course that appealed to him. An' you could prob'ly be a liberal education to a rich young stooge like him. He was studyin' you pretty."

"Oh, Silk—nothin' like that—but he was a good-lookin' youngster."

"So was the Edgewater Kid, from all I can hear. An' they put him on the spot, didn' they?" roared Freeman. "It's jennies like you get good men croaked. For fifteen bucks you can get your hair set permanent. But there ain' enough dough in the world to get your brains set that way."

Polack Annie was in no position to battle. She swallowed dryly.

"I—I didn' say nothin'—jus' that he was a well set-up boy, an'——"

"Listen, fire-top. His ol' man owns a fleet o' river-front trucks. I've had my eyes on it a long time, an' nobody knew it. T'night he happened to be in the dive. An' he had his eyes on you. I almos' forgot about his dad's game. It looked like that silly juve might o' gone along neat. But—no. He's got this Schuyder moll—s'ciety, dough, class, fam'ly an' woozy about him. But he has to itch. He jus' has to.

"An', with the inspiration o' youth an' dumb Irish he picks out o' eight million people, half o' whom are women, one—who? The one who's with Silk Freeman! He's a grand picker, that punk. I'll run him so fast an' so far that his soles'll be so thin that if he steps on a dime he'll know if it's heads or tails. B. B., an' nobody else, speaking!"

Polack Annie lit a cigarette.

"Aw, Silk—you're overplayin' the whole sketch—I just asked who he was."

"That's all. An' he just asked who you was. He knew who I was. That's what candles me. Sweet spirits—I knew red hair had a kick, but I never dreamed it was that potent. It robs a guy of all sense o' humor, all sense o' p'por-

tion, all sense at all. That young Gillespie saw you with me—ME—Silk, in the flesh. An' he had the guts to buzz the waiter . . . this world's goin' goofy."

"Oh, B. B., you're such a big man—why be so small?" wheedled Annie.

"I was small long enough. An' don't ask me questions. My specialty is givin' orders, not answers . . . an' that'll be enough o' findin' fault with me, too. I'm about fed up. Did it seem a long time I was away?"

"Long," echoed Annie, with artistically faked dreaminess, "it seemed ages!"

"That's as it should be," said Freeman. "It'll be more ages before I leave you again."

"But, listen, dad," Tommy Gillespie was saying, "why go into a decline because a dozen or so truck teamsters quit? Times aren't so fat right now. There must be many an honest man eager and ready to take a job."

Tall Tom Gillespie looked down at his idol, his kid. His kid was a Yale graduate. His kid looked like his mother. His kid was smart, brave, fine. Tall Tom wished he was a young

girl instead of an old man—he just wanted to show Tommy what love really was.

"Boy," said the grizzled old politician, boss trucker and pier fighter. "I haven't gone through all this all this time for nothing. Somebody is muscling in on us. Do you understand what that means?"

"I would if it was anybody else but us."

"That's talking. But—that's the way things are run now. And they've let us by for a long time. Now they've got around to us. I'm not as young as I used to be——"

"But I am, dad."

"Fine. That's the trouble with a college education. They teach you Latin and algebra —but——"

"Well, I didn't have to learn everything in school. Maybe I was born with something."

"You were—you sure were—but . . . you never heard of Silk Freeman."

Tommy almost fell off the chair. He looked again at his father to make sure it wasn't some joke.

"I met him, dad—tonight . . . that is, I saw him . . . he had a beautiful girl with him."

Tall Tom Gillespie shot a glance at his boy,

then turned—ostensibly to light a stogey.

"Oh—he had a good lookin' girl, did he?"

"Gorgeous. She must have been a society girl."

Tall Tom laughed.

"Society girl—Hell. What's with Freeman is like Freeman."

"No, dad. She had eyes—oh, what eyes——"

Tall Tom shuddered. This was a blow—his son was only human. The old man had come from Ireland, he had slovened in steerage, he had slopped in the slums—and his only-born thought that a girl was high-and-lofty because she was pretty.

"I didn't want to worry you, youngster," said the old man. "But this Freeman is crashing in on us."

"I'll break his neck," cried Tommy, impulsively.

The laugh that Tom Gillespie let go wasn't so robust.

"You may know your New Haven, baby—but you aren't quite up on your New York. Rather than see you get in trouble, I'll see every truck I own on the junk-heap. We've got plenty. We can retire."

Tommy stood up defiantly and squared his shoulders.

"You can retire," he said. "But I'm only starting. No Freeman is going to run me out of my own . . . gee, that was a swell-looking girl, dad!"

Tall Tom Gillespie's eyes went wet. His cub reminded himself so much of himself, when —courage, a girl, a fight, the thrill of youth in the responding veins and the course of warm blood from a stout he-heart——

"I'll retire, dad—right now—but not from business. I'm going to find out what's back of all this. I know my mind now. No swivel-chair job for me. I'm going on a truck—from the bottom up. And this is no Horatio Alger story. . . . Good night, pop. Here's one driver won't walk out."

Polack Annie was watching Silk Freeman counting $1,000 bills and smaller ones in his mahogany desk. He was writing deposit slips and clipping them onto the little piles of precious papers.

"I'll be washed up in just a minute—just one minute," he reassured her.

Annie whistled. The ex-convict servant flat-footed in.

"Scotch," she called. "And I mean a drink —not a sip."

"Give the lady what she craves," called Freeman, severely. "I don't like that kind o' beefs in this joint."

The gray-haired vassal came back with almost a tumblerful. He bowed and set it on the leaf of the desk. Annie downed half of it, rocked under the jolt and wobbled. She knew she had something coming. She wanted to break the fall. Silk Freeman was a Big Shot —yes; but the Edgewater Kid hadn't yet gotten out of her system. Even a Polack Annie can be human. What do you mean, "even?"

B. B. finished with his banking, dropped the pen. He lit a ciggie and leaned back in his chair. He half closed his eyes and he contemplated Polack Annie through the smoke.

Annie bent just far enough backward so his extended fingertips wouldn't touch her skin.

"Broad," he said, "do you care at all for me?"

"I care as much for you," she said solemnly, "as for any living man. I swear it!"

"You do!" and he lunged forward. "Say that again—you do?"

"I do. May I croak where I sit if I lie."

Silk Freeman got out of his chair. He bent down and kissed the vagrant visitor on her neck.

"Annie," he hoarsed, "that'll start all I crave up to now. In the morning you'll tell me better . . . are you ready?"

"Ready," answered Annie.

CHAPTER VII

Cyclone Tim McCloskY was a dese, dose and dem guy. Tough, ungodly, uncouth and—with a heart as big as a Mulberry Street watermelon. He was the giant leader of the River Rats—as unearthly a crew as was ever gotten together on land or sea or beneath the Brooklyn Bridge—vicious, ferocious and predatory men captained by as tough a roustabout as ever kicked a cobblestone on South Street—and a great guy at that.

Cyclone Tim was no ordinary Kansas twister that tears the seat out of a man's pants. He was a typhoon that tore a man's insides out. No weapon was too low for him, nor were there any gentleman's rules in the rough-and-tumble battle of his existence. He had been cuffed in childhood by his mother, beaten in youth by his father, and clubbed into manhood by the police. His followers were loafers, lushers, jackrollers, lumberjacks, stevedores, sailors who had deserted ship and a mob of East

River toughs born or deserted to the garbage and muck of human possessions along the waterfront.

Tommy Gillespie, greasy cap over one eye and muscles bulging beneath soiled dungarees, found Cyclone Tim in a foul saloon on Water Street, just a block from the river where his father's trailers were loaded and emptied. He found Cyclone Tim because he was looking for him. It was no accident.

Tommy had been wised up to the ways of waterfront etiquette since his few days on his father's trucks. So he didn't talk out of turn. But he spotted the bulk and the hulk of Cyclone Tim at the end of the bar the minute he entered. He called for a drink.

The bartender, with lowering, suspicious contenance, set out the glass of colored alky without ever taking his eyes off Tommy. He acted as though he had a mind to snatch it back at the slightest move. Tommy tossed his head, threw a little laugh and sent the hell-sizzling hootch down his pipes. He made a wry face, but he grinned, wiped his mouth and edged down the the bar toward Cyclone Tim, half of

whose displacement lay sprawled out on the liquor-seared walnut.

"Have a drink," he called to Cyclone Tim, and waved his arm with a sweep over the bar.

"Don't drink," growled Cyclone Tim.

Tommy sidled closer. Cyclone Tim watched him warily, his great, catlike muscles barely tightening.

"Know Biff Glasson?" asked Tommy looking him squarely in the eye.

"Never heard o' him," moodily. Then, with sudden suspicious verve: "S-a-y—watcha tryin' t' do—get info'mation?"

Tommy spat it out—there was no other way.

"I'm Tall Tom Gillespie's son—that Bridge Twisters' mob is been hi-jackin' our trucks and chasin' off our men—I'll kick in good dough to stop it."

Cyclone Tim never answered a word. Never moved a muscle of his walrus-hide face.

"I've heard o' youse," he growled finally. He unlimbered himself from the bar, leisurely, dangerously. Tommy braced himself. Cyclone Tim drew up to his full height, and then he calmly looked Tommy over from head to

foot. Presently he sank on the bar again, folding his arms.

"I'll grab a drink on you," he yielded.

The bartender, in whose eyes nestled terror and who had held one hand beneath the bar at the indications of a fight, quickly set out two glasses of the sallow, foul-smelling stuff. Then, without asking Tommy, he planted out others for the drooped figures along the bar, who sprang straight up like marionettes at the first whiff of booze, and he poured a drink for himself.

"Here's to all o' youse," bellowed Cyclone Tim, making a swift move with the glass, which was like a thimble in his hairy, greasy paw. Various inarticulate sounds came from the bozos.

"Now, how much will you pay?" whispered Cyclone Tim, moving the thick-bottomed glass around absently on the wet bar.

"I know you hate the soul o' that Biff Glasson——"

"I said, how much will you pay?" Cyclone Tim countermanded sternly. "My hatin' is my own business. What's in this?"

Pete, the ex-convict servant, heard the deadened buzzer. He slid into his bathrobe and shuffled to the door of the master chamber. He rapped. Silk Freeman opened the door an inch.

"Bacon an' eggs for one—have the bacon crisp; boiled eggs for me, as usual; buttered toast—coffee—an' we start with orange juice —not too chilled—step on it."

Pete didn't answer. He just went. Silk Freeman turned to Polack Annie.

The sun was high and red outside, but in this room there was no sun. There were no windows in the Park Avenue apartment of the Big Boy. The servants' entrance was sealed with cement. It was a furnished vault. Here the regal racketeer was at home—here he sucked his opium pipe and tallied up the daily gross and spread himself. More murder and mischief were conceived within these sunlightless walls than in any other enclosure in this city of grift and graft. Here Silk Freeman worked and played.

"Annie," he heaved, "the bad babies in Chi that blew to Hell for you can smile in their

graves. I followed 'em all, an' I hand 'em a bend," and Freeman bowed from the waist. "They done some perfect pickin'. You made the big time. Now you're Silk's woman. Gee, lover, I never thought I'd go goofy over any p'tic'lar broad. But to me one hair o' your red head is stronger than the Atlantic cable. . . . Do you understand what I'm sayin'? Silk Freeman! I'm in love, you damn fool! Freeman—F-r-e-e-m-a-n—B. B.—hooked! Goin' college boy over a twist"——

"Speakin' o' college boys, Silk," ventured Annie, "did you say that young Gillespie boy was out o' Ha'vard?"

"Yale!" snapped Freeman. "What in the hell made you think o' him—at a moment like this?"

"Oh—nothin'—jus' you mentioned college—an' it was you told me he come out o' one"——

"Aw—yeh? Well, 'college' an' 'coffin' start wit' the same letter. C! See? You're puttin' the finger on that thick hick mick. What's the idee, blurbin' about him when you're wit' ME? How'd you like a swell bust in the beezer?"

"No—Big Boy—act your position. Sure,

you can ghoul me. But what's the vict'ry in that? . . . You was jus' tellin' me how much you cared for me''——

''So I do. An' cut out ravin' about that yellow-headed punk. I told you I'm gonna racket his ol' man's business. Biff Glasson is out right now moppin' up the details. But—from the firs' minute I met his eye in that dinner joint, he played like I was the Princeton team, or somethin' I was only goin' to muscle in—now I'm goin' to wreck them Gillespies . . . of all mornin's, this mornin' you could concentrate a little on Freeman. What is this rash you're nursin' about that sucker?''

Polack Annie tried to keep the color from coming up in her sensitive cheeks. She was helpless, broke and in-between.

''Silk,'' she breathed, ''you're like a high-school kid. Jealous! Peevish! Aren't you proud o' yourself, a big shot like you, owning a woman and scared yeller because she talks about a stooge? Silk, I'm s'prised at you.''

Freeman picked up a vase off the dresser and poised it over his head to crown this impudent upstart with. But he let it come down limply.

He deposited it there. He crossed to the bed, knelt on the rug, slid an arm around Polack Annie's neck, held her peachy, soft cheek against his, kissed the corner of her crimson mouth, and said, boyishly:

"Is my honey-baby sore at her rough sweetie-man? Maybe he's talkin' up out o' turn. If he is, it's becus he's woozy-woozy, goofy-goofy over his li'l woman-woman. . . . Does she forgive the brutal beast?"

Annie sensed her advantage. She sighed and said:

"Light me a smoke, Silk."

He looked at her querulously, curiously. Then he lighted a cigarette.

"Here," he said, heavily, and he inserted the cigarette into her deadly mouth. "You hate my guts—an' I know it. But I'm nuts about you, fire-top. Take a lungful o' that. No other woman ever heard me pull that kind o' speech."

"No other woman ever will. Big Boy, I'm dynamite. When they're t'rough with me, their pals are sayin' prayers over 'em. Now—sit down—I've put up with just about enough. You want me to breeze out o' here?"

Silk Freeman backed up. He looked at her, seriously, concentratedly.

"I don' know, beautiful," he said.

"Don' know—what?"

"Don' know whether to kiss you or kill you."

There was a knock on the door. Pete spoke:

"Yes, Chief," he said, "here's the breakfast."

"The hell with breakfast," shouted Freeman. "Can't I have some privacy in my own home?"

CHAPTER VIII

The boss stevedore, a thin wiry little fellow with cunning black eyes that shot quick glances from beneath a natty slouch hat stood upon the tailgate of a truck, his left hand full of numbered brass checks. Massed before him was a dirty carpet of faces—white, yellow, black—faces with hungry, eager looks.

Leisurely, with a gesture which might have graced a potentate, his right hand clawed off one of the checks, and with deft certainty sent it spinning into the mitt of the fortunate stevedore. This was how he would glean out as many as were needed to unload the gray-bowed banana boat which was being wharfed up by two noisy tugs.

The last tag was caught by a husky on the outskirts of the mob, and the boss stevedore hopped lightly from the truck. The remainder of the polyglot crew broke up with that confusion that tails a circus parade, and some went to another dock where luck might be bet-

ter, and others to sit in the sun on the sidewalks in front of the warehouses.

"Well," chuckled Cyclone Tim, slouched beside Tommy Gillespie in one of the waiting trucks, "he's got his gang picked right. Not a man he trun dem metals to but what's a Bridge Twister. I know eve'y one of 'em. Looks like a busy day, youngster."

"And we've got a few men on the trucks," laughed Tommy, starting the motor of the tractor and backing the trailer, a huge, box car affair, into the curb of the dock warehouse.

"But dese guys is out fer hell," grunted Cyclone Tim, as two men uncoupled the trailer. "I know 'em." He laid a grimy paw on the solid-muscled arm of Tommy. "Lissen, kid," he confided, "I ain' losin' no love on dis Biff Glasson guy. Like I told you. An' I may be a simp to be buckin' a guy like Silk Freeman. But I like you. You're a hundred per cent O.K. wid me—an' I'm wid you. Take it or leave it. An' don' leave it. I'm tippin' you."

"I'm taking it," and Tommy laid his own tanned, sinew-knitted hand over the hairy paw of the older man. "Silk Freeman," he mused, "he's got a beautiful, red-headed gal——"

"I don' know nuttin' about no wimmen," growled Cyclone Tim. "Don' bring in no wimmen. Here's me mitt. It's dirty—an' I keep it clean."

They shook. The bargain had been struck when Tommy had ferreted out Cyclone Tim in the dingy little dive on Water Street.

It was a bargain which coin started, but didn't finish. It was a contract built on that peculiar friendship which springs up between men of different castes and different strata of society—a friendship born of respect for the physical prowess of one for the other, and recognition of courage. It was then that Cyclone Tim had agreed to man a score of the Gillespie trucks with his own mob, and to make them work at the regular scale—forty-five smackers for drivers of five-ton trucks and fifty for drivers of ten-ton trucks—and not a nickel more. And the loaders were to get their regular three cents a hundred—the "hi-jackers" as they were known in truckese, who cheated and double-crossed on the weight and "took the rest with a gat."

Cyclone Tim was to get his divvy off the men —and he got plenty more besides. . . .

Already, a score of the Gillespie Trucking Corporation's trailers were jammed against the opened warehouse doors. Already the little steamer had been pushed against the dock. Already the fifty longshoremen were forming their queue to board the boat and drag from its vitals the tropical-green fruit which they would load upon the trucks.

Tommy, wised through the underworld grapevine which trickled into the flap ears of Cyclone Tim, waited for the trouble to start. Trouble that was to be the first open move to disorganize his father's trucking business on the waterfront, a business that netted a million a year. He waited with tingling nerves and tightening muscles.

As the first of the longshoremen, heading the line from the hold of the ship, led the way through the breezy, ample, spice-odored warehouse, came up to the first truck, he heaved his stalk of bananas the full length of the van. Those who followed him threw their loads with all their force against the sides, others stripped the stalks and scattered the fruit and kicked everything into the truck and around the floor.

Cyclone Tim and Tommy had been standing

by, watching them. When the first man had thrown down his load the giant gang leader stepped from behind a trailer and placed two closed fingers between his lips. There issued forth a blast—piercing, shrill, startling—the battle call of the mobster.

They jumped from tractors, popped from behind trailers, leaped from the very street—a hundred of them, privates of the River Rats, armed with two-by-fours with rusty, murderous nails bristling from the ends; carrying truck cranks, bricks and cobblestones.

From somewhere Cyclone Tim dragged out two sets of brass knucks—weapon of suzerainty of the old time slugger. He pressed one into Tommy's hand, but Tommy looked once at it and shivered. He clenched his own husky fists and jumped up on the concrete floor of the warehouse. He, at least, would fight fair. So Cyclone Tim armed his both hands with the brutal metal which would have put to shame the leathern, iron-loaded fist of the Roman cestus.

The River Rats swarmed into the warehouse, which became an arena of knock-down, drag-

out, skull-crushing fighting. Above the din could be heard the bellowing of Cyclone Tim, who was splintering jaws and slicing faces with his brass-clad hands. Tommy had hardly taken a step before a huge man rammed his head into the pit of his stomach. But the head hit muscle and sinew used to gridiron bolts, that received the blow like a brick wall. A lightning uppercut clipped the man unconscious.

Tommy, mauled and beaten around, tasted the salt of his own blood as it trickled down his cheeks into his mouth, and he went wild. How long it lasted, what happened, he would never know, because when a sudden flash of intelligence illumined his brain he found himself thrashing out his huge arms at his own father.

"Easy there, boy," chortled Tall Tom Gillespie. "I think you've done enough damage for one day."

Tommy blinked. An ambulance surgeon, cadet-like white cap askew on his head, was trying to daub at a gash on his temple.

"Where's Tim?" Tommy asked, blinking and relaxing.

"I'm copesettee, kid," said Cyclone Tim,

who was right in front of him. "I gotta hand it to you, boy—I've seen plenty o' rough 'n' tumble mills, and I've seen plenty o' tough guys meet tough guys—but, Tommy, pleased to mitt you!"

And they mitted.

CHAPTER IX

Polack Annie observed with concentrated interest the emotion of intense hatred in Silk Freeman. Polack Annie had seen that predominating storm of love in him—and no one else had been able to boast of that. But Polack Annie's red hair spelled red passion.

Soon he walked the edge of his anger off, paced up and down the Chinese-rugged chamber in his slippered feet; then he halted before the bed where she lounged, still propped on her two pillows, catlike, wary, prepared for a caress or a blow.

"Red-top" (his tone had a brutal kindness to it, and he hesitated and then grinned), "you want breakfast, don't you?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter," she parried. "What's the use o' breakfast today?—you've only got to eat again tomorrow, anyway."

She lit a cigarette and drew the virgin puff deep into her lungs, never taking her eyes off him. Silk walked to the door and opened it

cautiously, as was his custom, just an inch.

"Pete!" he called. And he closed the door, carefully turning the patent lock. He had hardly wheeled before there were three raps. He re-opened the door, this time widely, and let it swing and walked away.

The old ex-convict, Pete, strode in, tray in hand, the dishes warm, for he knew the whim of his master. Without a word he slid up the small teakwood table beside the silk-spread bed and placed, one after one, the breakfast dishes. Then he shuffled silently out.

As the door clicked behind the man, Silk drew up his chair at the table, opposite Annie, and carefully, meticulously inspected his food. Then he spoke:

"You damn red-head, you see now what devotion is. I sprung that chump from Sing Sing. He had a murder rap that sent him up for the book and I got him out. How? Well, how does the Big Boy do things! It's a game o' give and take. What the hell was his life in the Big House? It's a bigger house here. He's in prison still, but he likes it. You're in prison and I can make you like it. But I'm goin' to spring you."

"Yeah?" and Annie barely sipped her orange juice, and no high-born lady could have kept her eyes more carefully trained in her glass.

"Y-e-a-h, I'm goin' to spring you—and you'll spring right back." He leaned over the table and the silver coffee urn tilted precariously. "You know that young Yale stooge—that college kid that had you askin' questions? Well, I'll let him answer 'em. He started a battle with my men. When they start that, I finish it. I know you. You won't fall for him. You're too cold-blooded to fall for any guy, and you know where the pay window is—get me?"

"I get you," quickly said Annie, raising her coffee cup to hide what she suspected might be a blush—the first blush she had known since the Edgewater Kid had looked at her so ardently in the Devil's Hall in Chicago.

Silk fumbled with his toast.

"You know," he said, looking up suddenly, "I never killed a man—I never had a man killed over a jane. My theories have been funny in life. I considered friends those who best fitted in with my weaknesses. I never had

many friends because I never had many weaknesses. I never loved because I could always resist."

His eyes, always grayishly and steelily cruel, now seemed languid and tired to Annie as they looked into hers.

"Only you, kid," he whined. "Only you did I ever love."

"Pass that," snapped Annie. "You want me to get a guy—a guy I don't even know. What do I do?"

Silk narrowed his eyes and his glance was piercing, a glance that had struck terror in the soul of many a tough egg, and then he calmly sipped his coffee. Annie noticed that he had laid the toast down without eating it. She was carefully studying this man, who never gave any illuminating indication of what was really going on in the human mechanics of his brain. She said nothing.

"Red-head," he bit curtly, "I want to tell you a story. A couple of stories. There was once a guy I wanted to clip and I played on the most dangerous thing in his life—a woman. She loved him with a jealousy that could be aroused to criminal insanity. He was a simp.

It wasn't so hard to get another woman into his apartment one night, one of those trim little dolls I'd dressed up like a chicken, served dressed or undressed. I saw to it, too, that the jealous jane had a gat. That was that."

He gave a little sniff of contempt that jerked his shoulders back. His thin lips became thinner and narrowed eyes more narrow. Annie was indifferent. Her lessons in intrigue were confined to pineapples, gats and typewriters.

"Oh, yes," he grinned, "I said I would tell you a couple of stories. There was another guy. He was a simp, too, like all of 'em. I had to work a three-time combination on him, in another way.

"I had some foolish letters a married woman had once written to another guy and he had sold them to me—and I used them. I didn't like the woman's husband, anyway. I'd wreck that combination of a cheating, two-timin' wife and a boobish, trustin' husband along with my other plans. The doll craved clothes an' she didn't like any letters in circulation. I showed her how she could get the clothes an' enough dough to cop the letters. And she played into my hands and dealt the other bird jacks up on

eights. The husband called the deal. One guy's feedin' the roots of daisies, fond hubby is servin' the works up the River, an' the jane is one of my best dope-shovers. See?"

"Clever guy," nodded Annie, "an' what you want me to do—play the jealous woman or the worried wife?"

"Neither, you dumb red-head—I want you to go out and get this college punk that fell so hard for you—I want you to let him get you. I know he fell, see? The waiter was tellin' him all about you, and I could see his eyes burnin' that flamin' top-knot of yours."

"Oh," sighed Annie, "gimme somethin' harder. I ain't no kindergarten teacher. Lemme take a man over seven."

Silk smacked his hand on the teakwood table. The coffee and the water splashed over the linen.

"Take off your kiddin' clothes. When Silk talks he ain't mumblin' to hear himself. I want you to plant this punk on the spot! You don't have to do the dirt like you did in Chi—I'll have it done. Just swing him around gently to where I want him. We'll figure out the details later. He's the son of old Tall Tom Gillespie,

and when he passes there'll be hell—unless it's done like Silk wants it done—with——"

"With a fine Italian mitt, like Kinky King used to say—pat him on the back to find a soft spot to stick in the knife," purred Annie.

"You did learn somethin' in Chicago, didn't you, you little low-lived——"

"Sweetheart—you called me that last night," and Annie pushed the little table against his chest and jumped up and threw her arms about his neck.

"S-w-e-e-t-h-e-a-r-t," slowly enunciated Silk, enveloped in the perfume of her satin-covered breast. But he quickly pushed her away. Silk was himself again—business first.

"It's hard for me to do this—with you. I love you, red-head. But I trust you more than I could trust anyone else, and I know my love for you will make you do it." His lips tightened and he spoke with sinister authority and threat. "I know you'll do it, anyway."

"I'll do it," chirped Annie, shoving the table aside and sitting on his knee. "What you want me to do?"

"Date up that Gillespie kid for tonight. He's home now. He got a few scratches out of

that little rumpus today, and his old man made him get under cover. Call him up."

He pressed her forward as he reached down for the French 'phone. There were two there, but the other was used only for direct communication with a connection in the telephone company's switchboard room to check back on suspicious calls. Annie had learned that.

"The number's Midtown 0070—call it," and Silk pressed the telephone into her hands. Annie called, her voice drippingly sweet. Then——

"Hello . . . Is Mr. Thomas Gillespie, Jr., there? . . . Oh, thank you . . . Hello, Mr. Gillespie. This is the girl you saw at the café the other night . . . The waiter told me on the side what you said . . . I liked your looks, too . . . How did I find out who you were? . . . Well, I asked the waiter, too . . . Won't you meet me? . . . Yes, tonight . . . Oh, Freeman? I'll explain that all to you . . . All right, in the Astor Hotel, Peacock Alley . . . I'll be there . . . six o'clock—fine and dandy."

"Now you get in with him. Get the low-down on his habits. Meet him again. Get him so cockeyed about you that he'll go anywheres

an' do anything you say. Then, when we've got all his numbers, you'll bring him where we can handle him—sure an' safe. We don' wanna bump him off in daylight on the steps o' City Hall if we don' have to. But you know that system—it was in your town they wrote it—in Chicago."

"Leave him to Annie, B. B. I'll take him for a ride—in a taxi—an' after that he'll be willin' to meet me in Australia!"

CHAPTER X

Dressed in a snappy, informal dinner ensemble of blue with turban to match, all setting off advantageously her flaming hair and art-work complexion, Polack Annie entered the Astor from a taxi.

She felt strange and a bit bewildered. Here she was in the heart of Broadway, Silk Freeman's woman, a racketeer on the make, and worse—out to put on the spot the young son of a millionaire who refused to be muscled out of his own business and who had the desperate temerity to resist Freeman and Freeman's crew of wreckers and killers.

Annie had taken two human lives with her own hands. But there had been some emotional reason each time. She had shot Kinky King because she thought he had put on the spot her lover, the Edgewater Kid; she had done the same to Goldie Gorio when she found that it had been he who sentenced her man to be chopped down with typewriter bullets. But

this was entirely commercial. This was murder.

However——

More than one lobby loiterer gave her the quick eye and turned to follow her slender, agile figure as she crossed to Peacock Alley. Tommy was already there, marked for easy identification by plaster on his cheek and a hand in a neat bandage, if not by his upstanding figure and good-looking features. He raised his hat courteously. Both realized that a dozen strangers were staring at them.

"Let's get a cab, where we can talk," he suggested.

"Up through the park and along the drive," said Tommy, and into the jam of traffic the old car wormed and ground.

"Now," young Gillespie began, "tell me all about it."

Annie lit a cigarette.

"Well, you saw me first with Silk Freeman, so I guess you know I'm no lily. I got a slant at you an' you clicked. I got it right off that you was pipin' me, too. An' when the waiter tipped me that you were buzzin' him about who I was, I ast about who you was.

"This Freeman—he don't come under the

head o' thrilling entertainment with me much. I'm young. I like to dance. I like to play around. I've only been in this burg a few days. I haven't hooked up with any boy friends. You registered with me—that's all there is to the plot."

"Thanks," said Tommy. "Now, tell me—you and this Freeman. Are you—you understand—I mean——"

"Oh, I understand. I guess he thinks I'm all his. But I don't live with him, if that's what you want to know. I've only known him a week or so. I'm—a widow."

"I see."

"An' you? That li'l trick I caught you with in the café—where does she come into the picture?"

"Oh, Miss Schuyder? H'm—I've known her for years. We go around together a lot."

"Serious?"

"I don't want to lie to you. We're engaged."

"But you didn' hesitate when I started to date you, Tommy boy."

"No. I was delighted and excited. I would have found you as soon as I knew who you

were and where. I've got a little trouble on my hands right now—business. Wouldn't be surprised if your friend Silk had a finger in it. My dad's a boss trucker. We've been on the job for a day or two, and last night I got in a mix-up with some stevedores. That accounts for my banged-up appearance—and for my tardiness in hunting you up. I had no idea where to start, at that. And, of course, no notion that you'd want anything to do with a pup like me, just out of college, when you were running with a man like Freeman. But I was bound to make a stagger at it."

"Love at first sight, eh?"

"Nothing less. Strange coincidence that we two should meet up just at the time that Freeman's interests and mine should collide."

"Oh, I don' know a thing about his business. I hear he's a bad baby an' is in on a lot o' rackets. But I don't understand that sort o' stuff, an' we never talk shop. Tell me more about that doll."

"Oh, Alice? I guess what I've said is all there is to it."

"Do you—are you crazy about her?"

"I'm fond of her. We aren't very demon-

strative, if you catch what I mean. But it's been a presupposed match ever since I was in knee pants, it seems. Her father is my dad's banker; he was very helpful when dad needed funds and faith. I just took Alice for granted. I have never had much to do with any other girls."

Annie smiled.

"How do you keep 'em off you, handsome?"

Tommy looked at her by the light of an electric sign they were passing, to see if he were being bantered or flattered.

"I—well, at school I was usually in strict training and doing my quota of studying and class work, and at home, week-ends, I was usually with Alice. Oh, I know a good many girls, of course. But most of them know Alice, and——"

"What you need is a whirl in another world, Tommy boy."

"It's what I want, whether or not I need it. By the way, what's your name?"

"Annie. No last name. Just Annie. That'll be enough."

"Strange. But, as you would have it, Annie. Yes, I'm curious about life. And a lot of new

thrills have been crowded into mine in the last day or two."

"Well, I've had a few high spots in my young years, myself. But I'm still an' always in a rash for bigger an' better kicks. I'm just a pinheaded dame, chasin' pleasure. This town is a wow for me. I thought Chicago was swift —that is, when I passed through it from my home in—in Milwaukee; but this New York is the big-time stand.

"It's lousy with dough—an' only the peasants seem to work. Aroun' where I'm stoppin' at the Napoleon, there's a hundred jennies, dressed like a million bucks apiece, an' none of 'em knows what to do with her hands, they're so idle and bored.

"An' the men—they're in an' out at all hours —gamblers, racketeers maybe, promoters, fixers, steerers—I talk to the dames an' they spill, you see. Everybody here seems to be livin' off o' somebody else or a flock o' others.

"Even the legit money makers. They're brokers, agents, rep'esentatives o' one kind or another."

"You're no pinhead, Annie. That's a pretty profound analysis of the parasite army engen-

dered by the concentration of a metropolis and the specialization in service as against the productive factor. You see, I studied economics at school."

"I don't know a word you said—but what you studied about economics can't have a thing to do with it. That outfit is far from economical."

"No. I mean that huge businesses and the modern impulse for merging and pyramiding properties and privileges has thrown open to sharp fellows the opportunity to live off others without contributing to the prosperity of the community. These conditions make the Silk Freemans."

"Oh, let's forget that guy, Tommy boy. Let's talk about me."

"About you? Shall we start with your red hair?"

"They always do. What is there about a red head that makes men see red?"

"I never took a course in that, so I can't speak with authority. But you certainly have the most ravishing hair I have ever seen. May I—may I kiss it?"

"Sure. What delayed you?"

Tommy Gillespie pressed his lips to the deadly crown. Then he slid his arm around her shoulder and drew her nearer.

"Annie," he whispered, "I'm not an expert lover. I'm afraid you'll find me very unskilled at the ways of the game."

"I know enough for both of us," she answered.

"With you, I fancy, I can speak freely——"

"An' fast."

"Understand one thing, Annie. My father is well off. But my allowance, while generous in the circumstances, is—well, it would hardly interest you."

"Oh, the hell with your allowance. Why do you think I let a buzzard like Silk Freeman grab me? I'm one thing he didn' muscle in on. I was delivered C. O. D. What do you think—I want you to keep me? Or to shove a twenty under the door as you go out? Say, if that's the way I hit you——"

"No. No. Not at all. But what I mean is—if I—if we—I mean I'd want you to give up this Freeman—and be mine."

"Hey, Tommy boy—you DO work fast. A proposition for the works before the meter run

up a buck—an' in a gyp cab at that. Well, I'm much obliged; but I'm afraid you couldn't take on a load like that—yet. But once in a while—oh, man! Me for you!"

"Once in a while?"

"Yeh. You go big with me. An' it'll be a double joy to doublecross that Freeman. I guess that won't make you mad, neither. I resent him. He wallops me an' bulldozes an' bullyrags me. The touch o' his hands gives me the heebie jeebies. His chisel-steel eyes make my flesh crawl.

"I want a man. An' I mean a man! A man with some sentiment excep' jus' animal passion."

This was Polack Annie speaking—Polack Annie, who had been Kinky King's and Goldie Gorio's and the Edgewater Kid's—and now was Silk Freeman's—and out on the assignment to decoy the boy she was talking to where thugs could murder him and make a cowardly get-away—for the good of robbery and organized extortion.

"Annie," breathed that boy. "Let me kiss you."

"You bet. An' not on my hair!"

CHAPTER XI

At ten o'clock on the evening that Tommy Gillespie was spinning along upper Manhattan in a taxi with the flaming red-head, Annie, his fiancée, Alice Schuyder, received a telephone message.

"This is the operator at the Post-Graduate Hospital," came a soft, evenly modulated voice; "Mr. Gillespie's nurse asked me to call you. He is in a very serious condition, possibly fracture of the skull, and wants you to come to see him at once."

Alice, cold, unemotional by nature, was fluttered. She called her maid and instructed that her car be brought to the front door. She had learned from her father, who was Tall Tom Gillespie's banker, that Tommy had been in a street brawl on the waterfront, and she was peeved to learn that Tommy had so lowered himself as to become involved with the toughs and thugs along South Street. And, too, this had been the first information that he was

working as a driver on his father's trucks. What would her friends say?

But, now that she realized Tommy was badly hurt, she dressed, rouged her lips and powdered her face, and with studied calmness to forestall talk among the servants she stepped into her car.

"Post-Graduate Hospital, Charles," she instructed, and lighted a cigarette. The car slid gently from the curb and turned into Park Avenue, south. Along through the devious ramp around Grand Central Station and down into Fourth Avenue. At Twentieth Street it turned, and two cars cut in sharply behind it.

Alice's machine had already made the middle of the block before two silent, mysterious cars with rear curtains drawn swept by side by side and cut in at a sharp angle before the limousine. Forced to the curb, Charles jammed on the brakes. Alice pitched forward in the car, and when she had regained her seat she saw a man who had leaped from one of the machines approach from the left and crash his weaponed hand down on the head of Charles, who crumpled with one moan.

Two other men on the right wrenched open the door, and one of them grasped Alice by her silk-clad ankles and dragged her bodily from her seat. As she sprawled in an undignified attitude in the tonneau the other whipped a foul-tasting rag around her mouth between her lips, and then tied a handkerchief around her eyes.

Rough hands caught her up and she felt herself carried a short distance and thrown on to an automobile seat. Gears ground and the car moved swiftly off. She flopped from side to side, against the bodies to the right and left of her, as the car cut corners. She thought that first she had been going east and then north, then west. The calmness of her nature, the astuteness of the well-bred woman were gradually deserting her. Then Alice fainted.

When she came to the gag and the handkerchief had been removed. She was lying on a bed and her first impulse was to adjust her skirts, which were above her knees. As she arose she saw sitting beside her a brutal-featured, heavy-set man who was watching her with smirking countenance.

"Feel better, sister?" he asked in a husky voice.

She looked into his beady, vice-laden eyes and shivered.

"Where am I and what is the meaning of this?" she asked with chilly dignity.

"You're here an' there ain't no meanin' as far as I can tell ye, lady," chuckled the man arising and walking to the door.

Alice looked about her. Gray, unpictured walls. A room devoid of furniture, save for the fiddleback chair near the bed. No window, two gaping round holes in the wall on the right, holes through which soughed the air as through a ship's ventilator—holes which she knew not, but which led to outside—the "windows" of Silk Freeman's Park Avenue apartment.

The man had opened the door and Alice saw that it was of iron.

"Okay," he called, stepping back.

It was far past midnight when Tommy Gillespie kissed Polack Annie on her ripe, crimson lips and she left the taxi in front of the Hotel Napoleon.

There had been no calls. There was no message. She went up to her garish suite and telephoned a number. Old Pete answered. Mr. Freeman was out. He would try him at several places and tell him she had called.

In five minutes her bell rang.

"How was it?" asked B. B.

"Great."

"You're in early. How far'd it go?"

"Oh, he's only a boy. He's goofy over me. But he's bashful."

"Well, you ain't."

"I don' want him to get scared or suspicious. I couldn't make it too raw. You ain't in no terrific hurry, are you?"

"N—no; that is, when somethin's done it's done—when it's gonna be done it's maybe."

"Well, gimme a li'l chance to work on him. You want this here copper-riveted in the bag, don't you?"

"It better be."

"It will be. I got him all dated up pretty."

"Okay. Did he slip you any lowdown—any o' their plans?"

"No. The lad was too hot an' bothered to

talk anything but me. He said he had to get in early because he had to get up early; that's all. Leave him to me—he'll open up."

"Sure. Tell him what a hero he is—what a manly battle he's makin' against the powers of evil. That'll put his tongue on ball bearin's. Boys that age—when they're trying to bull a broad—go heavy on how brave they are. String along with him. Ask him to let you in on what other marvelous deeds he's going to put across. That an' your red hair——"

"Oh, he didn't overlook that. He said it was more Ha'vard colored than Yale colored, but he'd rather switch the pennants in his room than the shade o' my windblown. He babbled on that way for hours."

"Let him babble while he's able. What are you doin' later?"

"It's pretty late now. I've had a hard day after a tough night, young feller. We can't all of us be like you, Big Boy. I was just about asleep when you rung, an' I'm deep in the hay already."

"Oh, yeah? I'll be up after a while."

And the diaphragm popped with the cutoff at the other end.

Tall Tom Gillespie sat in his library, in lounging gown and slippers, smoking his pipe, sitting up to wait for Tommy. When the boy came in he tried to pass the door, an unusual act.

"Hey, there," called Gillespie. "Give an account of yourself."

Tommy came in. His eyes didn't meet the old man's in their usual straightforward way.

"Oh, I was—I was just out——"

"Not with Alice—she 'phoned you. And her father was here for several hours."

"No—not with Alice. With some one else. Some one you don't know."

"Some one you do know?"

"Why—yes, of course—what makes you think otherwise?"

"There was a call here early today, wasn't there? A woman, I'm told."

"Yes—there was. No one who'd interest you, pop."

"I want to caution you, son. I have some idea of how this Freeman operates. Look out for strangers. He knows by now that we're giving him a fight. He knows you're in it personally. Bob Schuyder and I discussed the

whole situation. We aren't any too sure of winning. Bob's standing with us all the way, and he has money and influence."

"You have some, too."

"I guess I have. But we're not overconfident. And, above all, I'm scared about you. That man will trap you if he can. Look out who you go with. Don't get into autos with strangers. Don't go to places unless you know them and the people who ask you. They'd take you for a ride or put you on the spot without laying down a cigarette."

"Oh, dad, you're seeing shadows and ducking ghosts. They wouldn't dare. If anything happened to Tall Tom Gillespie's cub you know the police would run that crew into the bay."

"Well, in Chicago they murdered a public prosecutor and a newspaper man; they've kidnaped stars and millionaires; nobody is immune."

"Don't worry about me, pop. I'm safe with this—person. I'll be on the job—at seven. Good night."

"Good night, son," answered the boss trucker. "I'll say a prayer for you—but look out, Tommy!"

CHAPTER XII

THE plug-ugly who was guarding Alice Schuyder in Silk Freeman's windowless apartment turned from the door and pushed it shut. He whipped a handkerchief from his pocket and walked toward Alice, a leer on his face. She wondered what was to happen to her now.

"You won't get sore, sister, if I put this around your eyes," he said, as he laid his dirty hand on her shrinking, trim shoulder. Then, with a quick movement he twisted the grimy rag around her face, over her eyes, and deftly tied it. Next he caught her two wrists and carried them back of her and bound them tightly.

She heard him shuffle off and open the door. She heard a few words spoken in an undertone, and then a voice at her side:

"Don't worry, Miss Schuyder—I want you to telephone your father."

A hand delicately touched her arm and assisted her from the bed. She stumbled over the

bare floor, and then her feet felt the soft texture of a deep carpet, down a long corridor. She was led to a chair, and she sat down. She heard the slight click of a telephone being taken off the hook, and the cold receiver was placed to her ear.

"Numbah?" came the cheerful brisk voice of the operator.

"Give her the number of your home," said the voice at her side, a stern, mandatory voice.

Alice called the number. She heard the 'phone ring twice and then the voice of her father.

"Hello, father! Something terrible has happened to me. I was on my way to the hospital to see Tom, and some men kidnaped me. I am being held somewhere——"

"Gimme that phone!" demanded the voice. The receiver was taken from her ear. Then Alice heard:

"Hello, Mr. Schuyder—what your daughter has just told you is true. She is being held. I'll make it short and snappy. This is why: Tall Tom Gillespie has been steppin' out of his territory. You're his banker, his backer, and you know what I mean. He has been playing

politics and usin' rough tactics and grabbin' other people's business."

There was a pause as the other spoke.

"What do I want you to do? Simply this. I'm holding your girl for one hundred grand—pardon me, one hundred thousand dollars. I don't need the money, but I want it as a bond. An' I want you to tell Gillespie that part of the bargain is that he gives up thirty-three-and-a-third per cent of his trucking business—that he got from the people I represent through his political scheming and his blackjack methods—get me?"

From the other end came a cacophony of verbal staccato.

"Don't threaten me, Mr. Schuyder. I got the upper hand in this matter. You'll do as I say, or I'll do what you don't want me to do—with your daughter. She's safe enough now. I'll call you at ten o'clock tomorrow morning and I want you to have the cash—no marked money, and in little bills. I'll tell you what to do then, and no double-crossing—you'll be trailed every minute and when you come along with the dough okay and square, the girl will be there."

He pressed the telephone into Alice's hands.

"Talk to him," he ordered. "Tell him he'll get his dough back in a year if he keeps faith. Tell him if he don't come through—it's you!"

Alice lost her composure for the first time. As the receiver was pressed to her ear she said in a tremulous voice:

"Hello, father! I don't know what this is all about, but for God's sake do something. I can't stand this. Give them anything——"

She listened for a moment and then jerked her head away from the receiver.

"My father said that he would expect your call at ten in the morning. Now what are you going to do with me?"

"Nothin'," came the same chilly, dispassionate voice. "Hang up . . . order what you want and don't worry about the expense. You're in a high class place, but you don't know it. And don't bother about anything—now."

The man helped her from the chair and back over the unseen passage. She was pushed gently onto the bed and she sat there in a daze. She heard the door close and then re-open and the heavy footsteps of that horrible man, who

removed the bandage from her eyes, and then untied her hands.

"Anything I can do for you, sister?" he smirked.

"Get out of my sight!" screamed Alice, and fell on the bed and pillowed her head and wept —for the first time in her life.

Silk Freeman let himself into the $50-a-day suite where Polack Annie was his non-paying guest in his Hotel Napoleon.

Annie was "in the hay," almost as asleep as she made out to be. He coughed as a hail to her. She opened part of one eye.

"Well, your boy friend hasn't come through to you yet, eh? Before we bump him off I'd like to have you get as much lowdown as you can on what their plans are—or would like to be. I have my own ways of shaping theirs, but any kinks we can straighten out is that much in the bag."

"Well, Silk, you see—you told me to hook him so he'll go where I say and do what I say. I can't talk business to him right off the jump —he might get suspicious. Besides, he's too

busy tellin' me how gorgeous I am to be takin' up such worldly matters as trucks an' stevedorin'."

"Wha'd you tell him about me?"

"Oh, not much."

"Wasn't he int'rested? Didn' he wanna know what I was like, an'——"

"He was more int'rested in findin' out what I was like. I told him I was a stranger here, hadn' known you long, an' didn' know a damn thing about your business—that I was stric'ly on the loose and pepped up to be good-timed an' paid some important attention to."

"We put over a fast one t'night. Sit up an' take notice. I got that Schuyder twist over in my hut right this minute."

Annie sat up with a jerk.

"Who? You've got what?"

"A couple o' my hustlers grabbed her off t'night an' brought her in. She don' know where she is. An' a few minutes ago I drove a spike way up into Mr. Tall Tom Gillespie an' his big brave boy an' his backer an' banker, Robert Schuyder. We'll show 'em what musclin' in means. An' a hundred grand for gravy, besides."

Polack Annie thought a moment.

"Silk," she said, then, "far be it from a dumb dame like me to teach you your rackets. But this time I think you took in too much territory."

Freeman pitched his cigarette out of the window.

"You think so, uh? To me no territory is too big."

"Maybe, B. B. Maybe. I heard Goldie Gorio say that once—so he paralyzed Chicago, hi-jacked Central Police Station and sprung me, made a sucker out of the Mayor and a chump out o' the Chief—until.

"So they put his whole gang on the spot and then they knocked off Goldie——"

"They knocked off Goldie? You did!"

"I never would of if what he brought on himself hadn't o' come off. So, lemme tell you —you're gonna bring the whole town o' New York down on your head."

"I'll bring the whole town o' New York down at my feet. I own politics. Anybody I can't jack up I can bang off. I'm sittin' on top o' the underworld. This here Schuyder job'll never get in the papers. An' all con-

cerned'll come clean—an' quick. On'y the insiders'll be wise. An' this'll soften 'em up for future op'rations. Kidnapin' Alice Schuyder an' killin' Tommy Gillespie——"

"Now," interfered Annie, "to that part of it there's some sense. What could be more nach'ral? You're racketin' his ol' man, he bristles up an' shows fight—what else could he expec'? But that girl—I sure ain't her mouthpiece or nothin' like that—but that's ridin' raw. An' if it ever DOES get to the papers —wow!"

Freeman laughed.

"On second thought," he said, "I think I will tip off the papers. We need a little free advertisin'."

CHAPTER XIII

Before Polack Annie awoke, Silk Freeman had disappeared, as was his custom of prowling and night-owling about.

She stretched and yawned into consciousness, then ordered a lavish breakfast from room-service. After that a cigarette. And then to business.

She was to 'phone Tommy Gillespie that morning, but it was too late now to make it at the appointed hour. She took a chance, anyway. Tommy was out. Well, she'd stay in and let him call her—she had given him the telephone and room numbers.

He wasn't long doing it. He was agitated. He told her what she knew better than he did—that Alice Schuyder had been kidnaped—that it was the work of the mob muscling in on the Gillespie business, and that he had to do a lot of quick work . . . but he must see her . . . he must!

"How's late t'night?" she asked.

"I'll make it. Midnight—the minnie golf course next to Roxy's—how's that?"

"Check. I don't know how to shoot—that is, with them funny tools—but I'll go through the motions."

"I'll get there as soon as I can. It's open all night. If I'm delayed, play ahead and wait, will you—darling?"

"Surest thing this side o' hell. Take your time. Li'l Annie'll be there fightin' off the ambitious Johns."

He sent a kiss through the telephone—then a sigh.

Cyclone Tim McClosky was standing at the end of the bar in the dingy Water Street speakeasy, fingering his empty whiskey glass, when a nattily dressed, rat-faced little fellow with a derby hat and hair-line mustache walked in through the front door. His keen, jumpy eyes searched the place and then his glance rested on Cyclone Tim.

"Huh, a dopey," contemptuously spat the gang chieftain, and spun his whiskey glass toward the bartender. "Gimme another drink, quick!"

Gingerly the little fellow came toward Cyclone Tim.

"Mr. McClosky?" he asked hesitatingly.

"What t'hell of it?" growled Cyclone Tim.

"I'm Benny Morris—Dopey Benny Morris. You've probably heard o' me—we had some dealin's in the past."

"Oh—Freeman's top dope shover on 'Cocaine Row,' eh? You got a hell o' lot o' noive t'come aroun' here."

"I'm through with Freeman," whined the little fellow. "He ain't been doin' me right. He ain't been kickin' in my divvy. An he says I owe him dough, an' if I don' pay I'm washed up."

"An what t'hell you want me t'do?" and Cyclone Tim downed his liquor without removing his eyes from those of the other. Dopey Benny looked quickly around the room and then in lowered tones said:

"Freeman's landin' a million bucks o' heroin tonight—thought you'd be interested. I'll give you the steer straight, an' all I want is my split, so's I can beat it far an' away."

Cyclone Tim never moved a muscle of his face. But his eyes bored into the shifty orbs

of the other as though he were trying to find a dark secret in their corrupt depths.

"Well spit it out," he shrugged finally. "Where's d' dope?"

"They're bringin' it in from Long Island Sound tonight at 10 sharp. It's already planted on one of them old schooners, anchored above Sunken Meadows. One o' them old boats left out there to rot—a five-masted schooner over near the Fort Schuyler side—you can't miss it—it's the last one out. They're goin' to land it in the railroad yards on the Bronx shore. The password is 'B. B.'"

"T'anks for d' tip," grunted Cyclone Tim, and he motioned to two men sitting in the little rear room. "Take dis dopey," he ordered, "an' tie him up and watch him close. I'll come back for him later."

"But—" whined Dopey Benny, as the two men seized him roughly and dragged him toward the back room.

"You ain't goin' t' put Cyclone Tim on no spot. If you're tellin' d' facts, oke—I'll take care o' you when I get back—if you ain't —huh!"

The narrows of Long Island Sound between Fort Schuyler on the Bronx shore and Fort Totten on the Long Island side, a pathway for ocean liners down into Hell Gate, where seven vicious tides rip and whip the waters in continual fury, is one of the most melancholy, deserted and unguarded spots within fifty miles of Broadway.

A short distance below this point are the mud flats known as Sunken Meadows, which rise from the waters at ebb-tide like a vast island, a menace to all craft, unmarked by lighthouse or buoy. Farther down is Blackwell's Island, where the scream of the siren in the dead of night tells of some desperate prisoner who had trusted his soul to the dangerous waters in a bolt for liberty.

Between the two, the two drab forts, which one day guarded the narrows from the enemy, and out of the channel of the ocean liners, are anchored, on an average, a half dozen boats, mostly sail craft which have fallen into desuetude. These hulks are left to the mercy of the heavy fist of the sea which day by day pounds them to splinters. Their once strong

decks crumble into dust or the wind and waves sweep them away, timber by timber.

This ship's graveyard is the scene of shady and nefarious business. These rotting derelicts are used as caches for liquor, dope and every form of contraband during the dead of night. During the day, fishermen row out to them and cast their lines from the crumbling decks. The shore line on the Bronx side is dotted with factories and railroad yards and denticulated with deserted arms of land reclaimed from the sea.

At 9:30 o'clock on the night of the afternoon Cyclone Tim McClosky was visited by Dopey Benny Morris, two pot-bellied launches gutted of everything save powerful engines, nosed silently up the narrow channel between Sunken Meadows and the Bronx shore. The boats, one following the other, picked their way carefully up past the silent, ghost-like ships.

When the last of the abandoned schooners was sighted, the engines were cut off and the two boats floated with the outgoing tide. As they neared the hulk a sharp voice came from the fo'c's'le deck:

"Ahoy!"

"B. B." sang out the reply from the forward launch.

"Oke—you're a little early—there's a ladder port 'midship."

The engines of the two boats spat out their staccato into the stillness, and both craft were quickly maneuvered to the port side of the schooner. Then came the bellowing voice of Cyclone Tim:

"Let 'em have it!"

Almost instantly from both the launches came in quick succession sharp jabs of fire, the rattling rat-tat-tat of two typewriters broke into the night, and the murderous streams of lead thudded into the decayed wood of the boat. While the machine gun in one launch continued the barrage, the other boat drew alongside, rope ladders were tossed up and hooked to the deck, and a dozen murdering thieves began to scramble aboard. The machine-gun fire stopped, and the other boat pulled alongside.

Cyclone Tim was the first on deck. He held a forty-five in each fist, and there was a knife in his belt. As his men gained the deck, they were greeted with a fusillade and there was a splash as one of the stragglers pitched over

the side. One bullet stung into the flesh of Cyclone Tim's left arm and he roared in rage.

His machine-gunners had fallen behind two rusted capstans and were sweeping the deck. The dope guard, which Cyclone Tim knew numbered but a dozen men, were concealed in and behind the pilot house, and they were peppering away through door and porthole.

The twenty-four River Rats found what cover they could. But the fight was short and sweet and bloody. After the first typewriter salvo, which crashed and cut through the ancient timbers, Cyclone Tim bellowed the command to charge.

The River Rats, all well-heeled, swarmed around the pilot house, firing through the wood, through the portholes and through the door. The water-logged deck was covered with blood and the night air was filled with shots, curses and groans. With his huge shoulder the giant gang leader crashed in the rotten door and he pitched headlong inside. With his right hand he slashed and cut with a sharp-edged knife and with the left he hit and jabbed with the empty automatic.

When it was over, Cyclone Tim ordered the

surviving dope guards tied up, the four dead ones were kicked overboard, and the dope, in little square packages the size of shoe boxes, was tossed into the launches. There were three of the River Rats missing as the launches sped back toward Hell Gate—and how many of the others came out alive would never be known.

Cyclone Tim stood above the shrinking figure of Dopey Benny in the rear of the Water Street saloon. He held a gun in his hand.

"You wus right," he grinned, as blood trickled from beneath his cap. "Dere wus a million smackers in dope, an' we got it all. An' here's your divvy, you double-crossin' rat."

He put the muzzle of the gun to Dopey Benny's head and pressed the trigger.

CHAPTER XIV

"If youse'll let me deal wid dese hoodlums, we'll have d'gal back sweet an' snappy," grunted Cyclone Tim McClosky as he filliped the gray ash from one of Mr. Schuyder's Habana perfectos on the Oriental rug.

The other three, Tall Tom Gillespie, Tommy and the banker, seated in a semi-circle in Mr. Schuyder's spacious drawing room at 9:30 o'clock on the morning after Alice Schuyder had been kidnapped, all peered at Cyclone Tim incredulously. All but Tommy, who had faith in the judgment of the grizzled old gang chieftain, and who had insisted that he be present when the promised telephone call was to come through at 10 o'clock from his fiancée's abductors.

Cyclone Tim seemed strangely out of place in the luxurious drawing room. He sported a patch over his forehead from the blow he had received the night before when his gang had hi-jacked in Long Island Sound the million

dollars' worth of Silk Freeman's dope. His left arm was stiff from the bullet wound and his whole body was mauled and bruised. He wore a greasy sweater and he had stuffed his cap into his hip pocket when the butler let him in.

But Cyclone Tim was not out of place among these men. Between him and Tall Tom Gillespie was an age-old reverence of fighters. He and Tommy were downright pals. And Mr. Schuyder was sympathetic to any agency through which he might reclaim his daughter.

On the table, beside the banker, were several bundles of banknotes. Cyclone Tim threw avaricious glances at them from time to time as Mr. Schuyder explained again to Tall Tom the conversation with the mysterious man on the night before, explained how he was to have the $100,000 ready when the man called at 10 o'clock; explained how the money was to be held merely as a bond to force Tall Tom to give up 33 1-3 per cent of his trucking business—a business, the man charged, Tall Tom had bludgeoned from less powerful rivals.

As Cyclone Tim listened with the cunning of his kind he suddenly sought out a bare space

between two Oriental rugs and spat on the floor.

"It's Freeman," he growled contemptuously.

"Whoever it is," sighed the banker, and he turned his melancholy gaze on Tall Tom, "I've got the money here and I'm going to pay it and get my daughter back. You and I have always worked together, Tom. When the money is posted and Alice is safe I don't care whether you carry out the blackmailing bargain or not —I'll stand to lose. All I want is Alice—safe and sound."

It was a few minutes to 10. Tommy began to pace the floor. Tall Tom remained in his stiff, upright position in his chair, in deep and silent thought. The banker nervously watched the telephone. Cyclone Tim leisurely helped himself to another Habana from the humidor.

Ten o'clock. The sharp, ominous tinkle of the telephone bell. Tommy froze in his tracks. The muscles of Tall Tom's face twitched. Mr. Schuyder, for the moment, seemed paralyzed. A hopeless, forlorn expression spread over his thin, white face. Cyclone Tim was on his feet like a cat.

"Don't touch dat 'phone!" he growled as he

walked toward the table. He yanked the receiver off the hook with his right hand, as he could hardly move his wounded left arm. He placed the receiver to his flopping ear and stuck his twisted, snarling lips into the mouthpiece.

"Hullo," he said in a low tone such as convicts use when they address each other in prison. "Mr. Schuyder—yes he's right here . . . No, he don't wanta talk to you"—the banker shot a despairing look at Tall Tom and then sank back in his chair—"Who is dis? . . . Never mind who dis is—who are you? . . . Well I'll tell you who y'are. You're Scotty MacDonald, dat little shyster punk aroun' from Jefferson Market Court—I never fergit no voice—I know you and you're playin' wid Silk Freeman . . . No? Well I'm goin' t' tell you somet'in' an you can burn it into de ear o' your B. B. You can tell him you was speakin' to de gink dat grabbed off his million smackers o' dope las' night out in de Sound—get me? . . . I got de dope and youse has got de goil. If dat jane is wort' a hundred grand to Silk, she's sure wort' ten times dat to me. So, let's do a little business on dis 'phone at 'leven t'night —an' no double-crossin' . . . s'long."

Cyclone Tim threw the receiver with a clatter on the hook. He turned to face the others—Tall Tom watching him keenly admiringly; Tommy with an awe-struck expression. The banker was now cunningly alert at the mention of a million dollars and a fight with weapons of his kind.

"Dem's sure good stogies," commented Cyclone Tim, digging his dirty paw into the humidor.

Polack Annie, who had shot with more noble implements, was aiming to coax a golf-ball through a grated hazard under the incandescents of Broadway's own night-life peewee links on Fiftieth Street. Nine men, oddly enough, were gathered about her, all waiting to play that same hole. She looked neither to right nor wrong: though she had never hit one of the funny sublimated marbles before, she knew enough about the game to keep her eyes on the ball.

She missed the putt. But the moment was not a total loss. For just then a roadster drew up at the entrance, and out leaped an athletic young fellow, Tommy Gillespie. He tossed a

half dollar on the ledge and, disdaining the club and ball, entered hastily and looked around.

When he saw the knot of men he sensed that Annie would be in the center. They all looked at him resentfully as they saw her drop the putter, abandon the hole and the whole business, and stroll with her hand on his arm out the gate.

He seated her in his car, hopped in and hopped off. She was still holding his arm, gently feeling his trained muscles as they played with the turn of the wheel and the shift of the lever.

"Gee, you're strong," she enthused.

"Strong for you," he answered, boyishly. "We've had a busy evening—and we're going to be busier still, I fancy. But I mustn't embarrass you with this. Cyclone—I mean a friend of mine—thinks—well, a friend of yours is behind the kidnaping of Alice."

"Oh—so? It's jus' too bad about Alice. What'd Silk want with her—he's had ME!"

"Well, it isn't just that sort of an attachment—whew, I hope not!"

"That's right. Youse two are engaged—yet. H'm—you know, Tommy boy, I think I could

marry this Freeman if I took good aim at him."

"Heaven forbid!"

"How come? If you're gonna double up with Alice, why shouldn't I team with Silk?"

"He's a thief—a racketeer—a murderer —a——"

Annie reached for a cigarette. She lit it up with the little electric gimcrack and lit up her face with a smile.

"He's no lily—that is, from what I hear. But he's there with a bankroll . . . an' bein' Mrs. Silk Freeman for a while prob'ly means bein' a rich widow soon . . . them kind don' live to be pests long. I could——"

"You'll not marry Freeman!"

The boy almost screamed it. Annie stopped and looked at him searchingly, curiously.

"No?" she retorted. "L'l Annie no can marry Silky?"

"Stop treating the subject in that—that profane spirit. When I get this, this other matter —all straightened out, you'll marry me."

The amused expression of Polack Annie died. She dropped her head and gazed at him —cautious lest this be a jest or a gesture . . .

he was looking straight ahead, guiding his car into the park.

"Y-you? You would marry me?" she asked.

"Not I would—I will."

The gangster girl slumped rather than relaxed down in the seat. Nothing like this had ever come to her before. Surely enough, a few bohunk bozos, half drunk or on fire from her hair, had mouthed marriage at her; her one big love, the Edgewater Kid, would have married her—maybe—had he lived until he had to; but——

This boy, this rich, educated, refined, manly lad—from a realm beyond the dregs and the yeggs that had punctuated her whole existence; this handsome young millionaire would jilt a society heiress for the red-headed leavings of red-handed roughnecks; he would take her out of her slavery from the only world that ever had given her hospice and hostage; he would make her a lady—a wife. Annie Gillespie—she would have a last name! Mrs. Thomas Gillespie, Jr. She would have a fine name!

This boy—this boy—Annie suddenly put her gloved hand over her face for fear that those educated eyes that she had trained to cheat and

lie so long that she couldn't trust them herself, might betray her—this boy was the boy she had promised to put on the spot!

Things rocketed jazzily through her head.

Tommy had pulled up—in a dark place.

"This is the spot," he said.

She jumped at the word.

He slid his right arm around her. He held her tight. With his other hand he tilted up her chin.

"Annie," he breathed earnestly, hoarsely, "I haven't known a moment since first I kissed you that I didn't spend just impatiently longing for this moment when I'd kiss you again. . . . Annie I've never loved a woman before . . . do you—could you——"

She raised her face and her hot lips found his. Her arms strained him to her.

A harsh voice broke in:

"Hey youse two——"

It was a uniformed policeman.

"What the hell you think this is? You're in Central Park, not Inspiration Point . . . if you wanna pull that stuff go hire a room!"

CHAPTER XV

"Tommy boy," sighed Polack Annie as she lay in his arms. "I believe you now. It didn't seem possible that you, a refined young prince like you could really care for me—me! You don' even know who I am or what I am. It didn't seem in the deck. But now——"

"Annie, honey," whispered Tall Tom Gillespie's Yale-trained son, "I'd make any sacrifice rather than give you up. I know my father will be furious. And I hate to hurt him. But this is bigger than everything else. I'd die for you!"

"And—I'd kill for you! Listen, Tommy boy . . . you've got to clear up that Alice business, don't you? Well—I can help you. If Silk ever finds out I ratted on him, he'll strangle me. But that's the chance I'll take. I know where Alice is."

Tommy sat up sharply and gazed down into her eyes.

"You do?" he exclaimed. "Where?"

"Well, in no easy place to spring her, I'll tip you that much. She's in Silk Freeman's flat—in his house."

"Gee. That doesn't sound so tough."

"No? The doorman is a gorilla an' packs two gats. The elevator men the same. In the house, I don' know how much he raised the number o' guards becus o' this, but they's always two or three gunmen.

"The doors is made o' steel an' the walls is lined with it. There's sheet-steel doors between the rooms what come down solid by pressin' a jigger somewheres There's automatics an' sub-machine-guns an' them babes know how to handle 'em. A bunch o' Chicago hoodlums stuck up Central police station in Chicago on account of—well, on account of a girl—an' got away with it—an' I'd jus' as soon take on that one as this one. You'll get all the scrap you'll want, Tommy boy—an' promise me you won't go, yourself. W-will you?"

Tommy answered with silence. His answer was no.

"It's better'n even you'll get banged off, I'm tellin' you. I'm sorry now I tipped you at all.

You're big an' brave an' strong, but you're no gangster. These are trained gunguys an' killers in their hearts—they're p'fessionals. Stay out of it an' let the men who do such things for a livin' do it. That's their business."

Tommy shook his head.

"I couldn't dog it that way. I just couldn't."

Tears sprang to his eyes.

"I won't let you. I won't let you get out o' my sight—out o' my arms. My God! I can't lose you now."

Tommy kissed her and with gentle force disengaged her embrace.

"You'd better go home—to your hotel, honey," he said, "And we'd better not be seen together hereafter—outside, you know. You're in danger if Freeman gets the slightest suspicion. I realize that. So we'll make this room our meeting place hereafter and communicate by telephone otherwise. . . . I'll be very careful—don't worry—I have so much to live for since you come to me."

Annie protested no further. Men had always ruled her. She had sent them to their graves, but while they had lived they had ruled her.

There was a slight flutter of agitation in the manner of Silk Freeman as he continually tapped the ash from his cigarette when his Hispano-Suiza took the corner easily at Eighth Street and Fifth Avenue. Silk was not his cool and collected self.

At the corner of Sixth Street and Fifth Avenue the car paused for just an instant and a little, blond man, bederbied and bespatted, quickly opened the door and bounced into the seat beside Silk, who only grunted.

"Drive down Seventh Avenue," Silk ordered his chauffeur, beside whom sat another man. These were his bodyguards, and they never left him.

"It's that McClosky gang that got that dope!" he stormed. The little fellow shrank back as though expecting a blow.

"They ain't so hard for a man like you to handle, eh?" he whined.

"Hard! There ain't nobody too hard for Silk to handle. Get that under your thick Scotch skull. That Cyclone Tim thinks he pulled a fast one on the Big Boy. He's pulled the whole East River down over the heads of his lousy mob." Silk leaned forward and his

cruel, steely gaze made the other wince. "Get me right. We're not givin' in. I've got the girl and I'll have the dope and I'll pin those flop ears of McClosky over my desk. I'll wreck Gillespie, and I'll serve him his punk son's heart for dessert. That Schuyder jane'll never look the same to her old man—if he ever sees her again."

The little shyster was trembling so that he could not raise his cigarette to his lips. In all his shady dealings with the Big Boy he had never seen him give way to anger like this before.

Silk tapped on the window and motioned to his chauffeur to stop. The car slid to the curb. It was a deserted block of darkened office buildings. Down on the corner was a little cigar store, which was open. Silk jumped out and the little lawyer followed. The chauffeur and his companion flanked the two as they walked down the street toward the store.

Silk glanced at his wrist watch. It was two minutes to eleven.

"Now you got me straight—tell 'em flat," he cut off his words. The shyster made an inarticulate sound. He had not yet found his

voice. Silk followed him into the store and held the door of the telephone booth slightly open as the other called the Schuyder home.

"Hello," came the thin, trembling voice of the lawyer. "Yes it is. . . . But get this straight—the deal's off——"

Silk, whose sharp nails were biting into the palms of his clenched hands, fairly yanked the other from the booth and snatched up the receiver himself. His words came like the metallic staccato of a riveting machine.

"Listen, flop-ears! You ain't even goin' to make a pretty corpse. They'll have to bury you on the installment plan. . . . You ain't afraid? . . . You know who's talkin'? Well, it ain't the guy you think it is . . . I got the dame and I'll get the dope and I ain't singin' no song . . . Tell that mick, Gillespie, he may as well fold up now, an' that Heinie, Schuyder, he'll see his daughter—in hell! . . . Ten o'clock tomorrow night—Tuesday night's the deadline. . . . I'm bein' soft an' givin' you one more chance——"

Silk flung the receiver at the hook, elbowed aside the shyster and tossed the fawning clerk a ten-spot as he strode out.

Cyclone Tim McClosky stood at the end of the bar in the Water Street speakeasy and threw in a slug of the booze that burned a knot out of the wood wherever it slopped over the glass.

His cap was shoved far back on his massive head. He was in profound thought. He knew that Silk Freeman knew. And he knew that Silk Freeman was no pushover.

Tommy entered. Tim's eyes lit up. He loved that youngster. He saw at once that young Gillespie had something momentous to say.

Tommy told Tim swiftly—what Annie had told him.

"I got to round up good men for dis job," observed the Cyclone. "An' we got to put on a spotter to office us when B. B. goes out—I don' want no pers'nal business wit' him at dis time. I ain't afraid o' him—you know dat. But if him an' me meet, one of us has to croak. As it is, we might be able to stick dis joint up, grab the gal an' make a clean getaway. I don' wanna get you in no more gattin' than what's necessary, neither.

"I got to get some tools, too. I got a pretty fair idea now how I'll op'rate. I've heard of

them steel doors before. To batter 'em down would be a lot o' noise an' some neighbor'd holler copper. It's in a big flat buildin'. We got to work pretty quiet. I got to lay my hands on a couple o' cars, too, jus' a p'tic'lar kind . . . yeh, I think I can turn his trick okay.

"This here Freeman's sorer'n a pup. Ev'ry step I take I'm lookin' for a machine to whizz past an' spray me wit' typewriter lead. If dat Dopey Benny knew where to find me, Silk knows, too. It's a cinch he's put me on de spot by now; anyway he put de finger on me . . . by de way, how about you? He'd frame you in a minute. Your ol' man tells me about some dame—what 'phoned. Who is she?"

"Oh, she's all right, Tim. A little secret—you know."

"No, I don' know. It'd be jus' like that buzzard to aim some good-lookin' chippy at you to get in wit' you till you're off your nut over her an' trust her, an'—bam! You'll be lookin' in her eyes when you get it in your back."

Tommy blinked. Could this be? Could Annie . . . oh, no—it was preposterous.

"You better go easy, kid. An' find out if she by any chance knows this here Big Boy."

Know him! She had been his woman! Still was, in truth. She was at that moment sleeping in his suite in his hotel . . . but she had betrayed Silk to him, not him to Silk—yes, but wouldn't a woman who would double-cross one man double-cross another? Wasn't that the way these people of the underworld usually did their framing? Wasn't it possible that this whole labyrinthian run-around was "the spot"?

Couldn't it be that Freeman had kidnaped Alice, then sicked Annie on him to win him and to whisper to him where Alice was, knowing he would go to her rescue—and thus walk into an ambush where Freeman could kill him in his own home—and even justify himself by showing that Alice hadn't been there at all? True, Annie had begged him not to go. Mightn't she have figured that would surely make him insist on being in?

CHAPTER XVI

Exclusive Park Avenue lies like a lustrous, myriad colored serpent at nine o'clock at night. Like two huge, moving serpents, really, for the steady stream of traffic is moving up and down, back and forth, on either side of the tiny parks that divide the broad thoroughfare. Down the grade which begins around 72nd Street, the boulevard apparently comes to an abrupt end at the tall and graceful New York Central Building—but here the cars shoot in and out of the very building itself, for the street enters it on both sides.

This dignified and beauteous avenue is flanked on both sides by stately and snobbish apartment houses where people live at yearly rents which would pale a bank president's salary—society folk, gamblers, bootleggers, racketeers, stars and actresses. And in one of these structures lived Silk Freeman, in a structure that he himself had planned and built for the sole purpose of providing a sanctuary

befitting his station in life and ways of life.

Before this building, under its illuminated marquee, stood, as one of a regiment of uniformed puppets up and down the street, dressed like Slavonic generals—Silk's own doorman—a huge, dark-visaged man who had run the gamut of vice and murder. This grisly Cerberus guarded the portals of Silk's palace. And the huge, hairy paw which opened the doors of the limousines that stopped there was more fitted to handle a gat or a blackjack.

On the evening that the Big Boy had set as the deadline for final negotiations toward ransoming Alice Schuyder, and a short time before that appointed hour, a smart delivery truck, with the sleek, trim lines of a limousine, stopped directly in front of the service entrance. The doorman, to whom suspicion was second nature, strolled warily toward it, and as a man, garbed in smart uniform, leaped down from the driver's seat:

"Whatcha want?" growled the doorman.

"Got a desk here to be delivered to the Eighth floor—to Mr. Freeman," snapped the other, going around as if to open the rear door of the truck.

"There ain't no Freeman here," bristled the doorman. "What address you want?"

The other took a slip of paper from his pocket and handed it to the doorman. The latter read it and grunted.

"Must be some mistake," he said.

"I was told to speak to the elevator man—he knows about it—this desk is to be put in tonight, and I was told not to leave here until it was."

The doorman looked hesitatingly at the driver a moment, then turned and walked into the building. Three other cars, just then, slid up to the curb behind the truck, and as the doorman went inside a dozen men leaped out. Six of them followed him in. In a moment one came out.

"Oke!" he bit off sharply "Dem two blokes won't bother us."

Two others wrenched open the door of the truck and dragged out a new and shiny desk. Cars were streaming by the door and people were leisurely walking up and down—some with dogs, some with canes, some with only bored looks.

The desk was carried into the foyer and pushed onto the elevator. Seven men crowded in behind it. Five more, tough and well-heeled, loitered in the lobby. Outside, three more cars had drawn up, and inside them were a dozen more, but they remained in their seats, grim-visaged and prepared for anything and everything.

As the elevator shot up to the eighth floor, Tommy Gillespie looked at Cyclone Tim McClosky, who was beside him, and smiled.

"So far so good," he chirped.

Cyclone Tim only narrowed his eyes and shook his head.

The elevator stopped. The desk was carefully, noiselessly carried off. One man was strapping on a pair of goggles, such as an aviator might wear. Another lifted the lid of the desk, which came off, and two others drew from its vitals a tank, coils of hose and a long, twin-tubed, spider-like instrument.

Tommy stood back, admiring the trained swiftness of the workers. The acetylene torch was soon rigged. Cyclone Tim had been carefully inspecting the steel door which shut out

the Big Boy's apartment. With a piece of chalk he drew a circle around the lock, and then turned to the begoggled man.

"Cut 'er out around here," he ordered. The torch spat and sputtered, and then from the two tips there shot a business-like element-defying blue flame.

"Don't watch that—it'll blind you," grunted Cyclone Tim, and he took Tommy by the arm and led him down the hall. Behind him Tommy could hear the fire bite and sizzle into the metal. Cyclone Tim was fitting on his murderous brass knucks. Tommy clenched his fists, his blood coursing through his veins hot and fast.

"Take dis—but don't use it unless you have to," and Cyclone Tim pressed into his hand the cold metal of a pistol. Tommy stuffed it in his outer coat pocket.

"Oke!" came a voice, and Tommy turned to see the huge steel door swing open. It had been a matter of seconds to him. Cyclone Tim rushed in first, with Tommy close at his heels. They faced three men—two toughs on either side of old Pete, the ex-convict—and in whose hands were five gats. The guns spat fire and

lead. Tommy felt something touch his leg, but he sprang forward upon one of the two bigger fellows and they fell to the floor in a mad tussle.

Tommy had the man by the wrist of his gun hand and they rolled over on the soft, carpeted floor, breaking chair legs and overturning tables. The tough was cursing and putting all his strength in an effort to free his right hand from the vise of Tommy's mighty left. Now Tommy had him on his back, his knee in his chest, planting blow after blow on his head and face. But the other only grunted as each thud landed.

Suddenly, before he knew what had happened, the man twisted his body and sent Tommy spinning. He lost his grip on the other's wrist, and as he fell he saw the man take aim. But just then there was a terrific crack as a chair crashed on the gunman's skull, and as he fell, Cyclone Tim sent his huge foot into his face.

"Come on, let's get out o' here!" growled Cyclone Tim, lifting Tommy to his feet. Tommy saw, amid the wreckage of the drawing room, two other unconscious figures, sprawled out on the rug.

"But Alice—where's Alice?" he questioned, looking around anxiously.

"She's downstairs—in de car—come—lam, kid."

Tommy felt the blood trickling down into his sock. There was no pain. But he knew he had been hit.

One of Cyclone's men was writhing on the floor. Tim picked him up and slung him over his shoulder. The elevator stopped at the handsome lobby. A cordon of gangsters, who had been herding in a corner all those with innocent business in the building who had come in during the affair, escorted the three to the curb.

The Cyclone turned his wounded over to two of the boys, who carried him into one of the other cars. Tim led Tommy to the one where Alice crouched in the rear seat, a hoodlum with a big, black gun beside her.

"Oke, Mike—beat it," commanded Tim, and the gorilla vanished.

Tommy tumbled in at Alice's side. McClosky swung himself in beside the driver. The car lunged quickly ahead, turning sharply at the first corner, just as a police emergency squad

car drew up to Freeman's house. Someone, hearing shots, had 'phoned in a riot call.

"Alice—are you all right?" Tommy asked, leaning toward her and grasping her cold, white hand.

"Yes, I am—now," she answered with a haughty toss of her head. Tommy looked at her in wonder. In the flickering light he saw only her cameo-like profile as she stared straight ahead.

"And this is the way you act—the way you treat me when I risked my life to free you—Alice, I can't understand you, I can't——"

"Tom," her voice was ice, "I think you forget that my life was in danger—for you. You and your tough, ungodly friends. You can keep that sort of friends and that sort of associates—you belong better among them. I don't want to get into any of your dirty messes. It may sound cruel, but, remember, I had long hours in that hideous place to think about these things. I have decided to break our engagement."

Still she did not turn her face toward him.

Tommy grasped her hand—this time with fervor. His voice trembled.

"You mean it, Alice? You mean that our engagement is off! Alice, I can never tell you how glad I am that this—this has happened."

Alice turned and looked at him now, and as he sank back with a smile on his lips, she knew that his words were true.

CHAPTER XVII

The invincible yenyen for opium that Silk Freeman, with his titan will power had been able to control (for he smoked but once a day and always at the same hour), fell on him when he entered his devastated apartment a few minutes after Tommy Gillespie and Cyclone Tim McClosky had torched through his steel door, knocked out and crippled the two guards, tied up the old ex-convict, Pete, and rescued Alice Schuyder.

The Big Boy, who only recently had given away to his passions, both love and anger, found himself now so completely unnerved and maddened by this latest diablerie that he sought detachment in the pipe. The old servitor had been his official cooky for years, had prepared his pipe, rolled his pill and touched it with the magic flame. But Silk kicked the prostrate form of his servant, who still lay gibbering on the floor, and went to his couch to

satisfy his craving and still his turbulent senses.

He quickly opened the toy of opium, a choice Persian brand, high in morphine content, and dug out with the needle a bit of the black, gummy substance. He lit the small lamp and then he played with the opium on the bowl of his pipe, rolling it back and forth into a little pellet.

Then he jabbed it into the tiny hole in the center of the bowl, and without lying down on his side as was his habit, he sat on the couch and turned the pipe over the small, blue flame. The opium sputtered and crackled, and Silk sucked the black smoke into his lungs, in one long, ecstatic inhalation.

Then another pill, and still another cooked on his pipe and he felt the soft embrace of the drug around his jangling brain. The two bodyguards, who had followed him into the apartment, after he had received the frantic telephone call from an official source, stood across the room, shifting from one foot to the other in their embarrassment, for they had never before seen Silk display a weakness.

But the Big Boy heeded nobody, and a cruel,

wicked smile played on his thin lips as he smoked.

The telephone at his side rang. He appeared not to hear it, and then, after the bell had tinkled six times he took up the receiver, holding his smoking pipe in one hand.

"Yeah?" he snapped. "Oh, Glasson—come right up."

He turned again to his pipe. He now inhaled his tenth draw and he laid the stem aside. His fact was a pasty mask of hatred. The pupils of his eyes were pinpoints. He sat for a moment and then arose and began pacing the floor.

"Get these muggs out of here!" he said curtly to his two bodyguards, waving toward the wounded men. The bodyguards, coughing from the sweetish poppy fumes, dragged the bodies, one by one, into the room where Alice Schuyder had been held prisoner.

"Get a doctor for 'em—you know who I mean—and straighten up this joint."

He continued to pace the floor, kicking now and then angrily at some battered bit of furniture. The opium had whetted a nasty and dangerous edge on his mood.

Biff Glasson, king of the Bridge Twisters mob, was there in five minutes. He took one look at the chaotic, blood-spattered room, another at the chalk-white, leering face of Silk, and sniffed the opium fumes, but made no comment. When he entered, Silk turned on him quickly.

"Now, I won't stomach any more kid glove stuff!" he stormed. "I want you to clean out that McClosky mob and clean 'em out like crabs."

"Listen, B. B.," raucously growled Biff, "I've got that million bucks o' heroin spotted. It's salted away in a cockroach palace on Cherry Street, and I got a place rented right across the way. I'm ripe to shoot."

"You—you've found that dope?" cried Silk, planting himself squarely in front of the gang leader. Then a wicked smile played on his curling lips. "That's great. Grab it off quick. But get me that McClosky mob at the same time. Here's five grand workin' capital. Clean up!"

He shoved the money into Biff's hand and pushed him toward the door. Then went slowly back to his pipe.

Cherry Street, on Manhattan's lower East Side, was once the heart of the fashionable district. George Washington lived there, at the corner of Franklin, after he was inaugurated President of the United States.

John Hancock's home was at No. 5. Then, in later years, when the wave of immigration forced the aristocrats northward, their mansions were displaced by long rows of ramshackle tenement houses where lived a vice-ridden and poverty-sodden polyglot horde.

Cherry Hill, the highest point on the street, was the playground of some of New York's toughest gangs. There were the Daybreak Boys, the Buckoos, Hookers, Swamp Angels, Slaughter Housers, Short Tails, Patsy Conroys and the Border Gang. Some of the deathless prizefighters came from this district, where life was one continual round of street brawls, gang battles and all the ancient professions.

Today it is far more peaceful, for the gangsters and the crooks have moved uptown to the environs of Broadway. A section of a score of blocks between Broadway and Fifth Avenue and 46th to 55th streets, houses more speakeasies, dope dens, take joints, badger apart-

ments, "call" dives, than probably any other equal acreage in this country.

The only semblance of the old-time lawlessness of the Lower East Side was to be found in the two rival gangs—the River Rats and the Bridge Twisters. The two leaders, Cyclone Tim McClosky and Biff Glasson, had been enemies as far back as they could remember, and even as youngsters their two mobs had clashed at every turn.

And now Biff Glasson gloried in the revenge he would have on Cyclone Tim and his gang. He had already spotted the hi-jacked dope. Across the street he had planted two men in a front room, and day after day they had watched the changing of the McClosky guards—two would come and two would go—and Biff Glasson knew that somewhere in the dismal six-story tenement building was concealed the $1,000,000 worth of heroin.

So, at noon the next day—the day following his talk with Silk Freeman—he gathered together his entire gang in his speakeasy hangout on South Street. They met in a back room of the place—a tough and murderous battalion.

"I don't want no shootin'—this time," Biff's

voice was low and guttural. "De shootin'll come soon enough—for we're goin' to clean out dat whole River Rat mob. But first we've got to get that dope. It's somewheres in dat buildin' and we only got a few ginks to deal wid."

He paused and looked around into the grimy, leering faces.

"One t'ing more," he growled. "I want McClosky fer me own meat. Get me? I don' want nobody to croak dat hoodlum but Biff Glasson. But on dis foist job, knives and blackjacks, unless——"

He never finished the sentence, and the grunts about him told him he did not need to. The men filed out, their weapons bulging beneath their dirty clothes. A dozen of them piled into a covered truck. The rest got into six cars and the caravan started toward Cherry Street with Biff Glasson in the first car.

He knew that the McClosky guards were changed at noon, and it was now 12:30 o'clock. The six cars drew up at either end of the block —three on the north end and three on the south. The truck was driven directly in front of the house. At the corner, one of Biff's lookout was waiting for him.

"De two guys went in, but the udder two is still in dere," he informed the leader.

"Dat's fine!" exclaimed Biff. "We'll get four instead o' two."

He gave a signal, and followed by a dozen of his mob walked briskly down the street to the tenement house. Those in the truck jumped out and Biff gave his instructions in short, curt words.

"Six o' youse guys plant yerselves on every floor, so's we can find what flat dem bozos come out of. You, Hungry, take the top floor, wid you, and you, and you, and you."

He put a finger on one after the other. The men swarmed into the dirty hallway and shuffled up the stairs. Hungry Joe and his five had hardly gotten to the third landing before Biff heard the sounds of a tussle. Doors in the entire house popped open and frightened faces of women and children peered out, and then the doors slammed shut.

Biff Glasson took the steps three at a time. Hungry Joe and his men had come up the stairs just as the two McClosky mobsters were leaving the apartment. The two guards had jumped back through the door, but not before

Hungry Joe and three others got inside. Someone had bolted the door then and the eight men inside began fighting it out.

With a mighty running kick Biff Glasson rammed his weight against the door. It burst open and he stumbled over the body of Hungry Joe, lying on the small kitchen floor. A dozen of his men followed him. In the next room of the flat he found two men on the floor, squirming and pummeling each other. Biff cracked one on the head with a blackjack and the man fell back with a moan. He made the rear room just in time to see one of the River Rats, blood streaming from a gash in his head, crawl out on the fire escape. Biff ran to the window. The man pulled himself up the iron ladder to the roof and when Biff started to follow a brick grazed his head and momentarily stunned him.

Cyclone Tim McClosky was just tossing off a barbed drink when Goo Goo Kurtz, who had escaped from Biff Glasson, staggered into the saloon, blood spurting from his head.

"Dey—dey copped de dope," he murmured weakly, and fell to the floor. "Dey're dere now. Glasson's wit' 'em—" he could say no more.

CHAPTER XVIII

As his dying vassal, Goo Goo Kurtz, blurted out the news of the dope raid and tumbled senseless on the dirty, sawdust sprinkled floor. Cyclone Tim McClosky growled deep and throaty—but didn't change his position at the bar. He nodded to the bartender, who quickly and nervously spun out the bottle of the blistering nepenthes of a hell that held no terror for Tim.

The Cyclone never stooped to a chaser, and now he gulped off three slugs of the villainous liquor in thirty seconds. He jerked his huge bulk into an upright position, tweaked the beak of his cap down over his lowering face, pointed in passing to the prone figure of Kurtz, and strode through the door.

All the hot hatred which sizzled in his soul against Biff Glasson, a malice which had grown into a raging religion from their first youthful rivalry on the waterfront, now spurted the

blood of vengeful urge tearing through his veins like vitriol.

Across the street he stomped into a dingy little poolroom—a blind for a hundred nefarious and devious deviltries. In the dim, smoke-solid air a half dozen men pulled themselves up as he entered, for Cyclone Tim never came there unless on quick and extraordinary business.

"Round up the mob an' hustle 'em over to Cherry Street," he ordered, stalking to the rear and into another room. He dialed an antiquated safe and by the handfuls he flung out weapons—gats, knives, blackjacks, even lead pipes on which still clung dark and ominous splotches—blood.

Cyclone Tim's order crackled like a rookery fire through the district; in groups and singly his mobsters crawled from their dark holes and hurried into the poolroom. In a few minutes he had armed a dozen men, and Cyclone Tim, at their head, started toward Cherry Street, just around the corner and two blocks up.

When he came in sight of the corner and glommed the three automobiles parked there, he barked the sharp, curt order to charge:

"Kill every damn one o' de lice!"

With no battlecry or peep of warning, the dozen men swarmed at the cars. The River Rats had the strategical advantage of surprise, and the ten men guarding that end of the Cherry Street block, although tensely alert, were taken unaware. The River Rats let loose a deadly fire as they ran, and the Bridge Twisters tumbled out of the cars, one to move no more, others to offer an overdue resistance to the furious attack, some to run down Cherry Street to huddle with their comrades.

Cyclone Tim plunged into a doorway as a murderous machine-gun fire from the rear of the truck swept the narrow passage. The truck was loaded with dope, and under the protection of the typewriter it got off with a terrific grinding of gears and demoniacal grumbling of racing engine.

"Dey copped de dope, damn 'em," Tim cursed, as he hugged the doorway, "but I'll cop Glasson!"

Passion for revenge was now stronger in his hot heart than avarice or pursuit of worldly property. As the truck lurched away, the bullets from the machine gun spattered the street, striking sparks from the sidewalk, cutting off

the rotting cornices of buildings, tearing up the street, whistling by, thudding into wood and brick and cement.

The Thompson-gun fire abruptly stopped. The truck had vanished. Then, from doorways, from behind steps, and from around the corners swarmed the rival gangsters. The dingy little street became the scene of a bestial battle which might have done credit to the clashes of the Bowery Boys and the Dead Rabbits in their ancient and weekly street feuds around Five Points.

As the rat-tat-tat ended and the combatants ran at each other with gats, brass knuckles, clubs, rocks and every handy form of weapon, a hundred heads popped out of the tenement house windows on both sides. Then the heads disappeared, and out of the windows came pots and pans, bricks and chairs and oaths and even hot water and ashes. But the gangsters carried on, grimly heedless of the rest of the world, though now and then one was knocked cold by some domestic implement, or another was blinded by the ashes and hot water and left to the mercy of his enemy.

Cyclone Tim's men were woefully outnum-

bered, but as the fight progressed others of his gangsters, who had heard the scrap or of the scrap came running into the block—toughs from the waterfront, unaware of what the fight was about or who was fighting—sailors, stevedores and bums—unable to resist a good scrap, jumped into the mixup, entered the brawl on their own, picking the most convenient combatant.

Cyclone Tim, battling with the fury of a wildcat, bellowed:

"Come on! you dirty rat—Biff Glasson. I'm out fer yer gizzards—you yeller left-handed Protestant——"

Finally, in the middle of the block, he spotted the mighty Glasson. With a yell he bounded forward. For a moment the blindness of an ungodly vindictiveness overcame him, and he began cutting at everything and everybody with his murderous fish knife, whetted down to a razor-edge, and thrashing out in frenzied fury with his brass-knuckled fist in a drive to get at his enemy. More than one of his own men, whom he ran into on the way, knew the sting of his knife and the bone-smashing blows of his metalled fist.

Biff Glasson, for his part, was as eager to close with his rival. He shouted:

"Clear the way—you bums! Don't let no man touch dat skunk! He's mine!"

Suddenly the two desperados found themselves face to face in a small, cleared arena, for the other gangsters on both sides had long awaited this opportunity to witness the inevitable battle to the finish between the two giants.

Cyclone Tim semi-circled his head like a wounded bull and crouched his body for the charge. Blood and dirt and sweat slimed his scowling face. His knife dropped and dripped blood, and from the corners of his mouth oozed a greenish goo.

Biff Glasson was his equal and Cyclone Tim knew in his heart that he was. Just as muscular and sinewy and nimble and murderous. He held in his left hand a blunt, short club, and in his right a gleaming dirk.

For the shortest instant the two stood facing each other, each waiting for the other to dare the first move. And in that instant there flashed back through the slow-moving brain of Cyclone Tim their first battle, when they had stood like this as kids, each daring the other

to cross the line. That fight had been with bare fists and each had claimed the victory. And there had been many more fights during the years to follow, and neither had ever stopped or been stopped. It was still even.

But now——

"Come on, you lousy mugg!" snarled Cyclone Tim, grinding his teeth.

Biff Glasson, like a streak, swept out with his stick. There was a crack as the hardened wood came down on the Cyclone's solid skull. But he shook off the effects, and with a mighty parabola of his knuckled fist he caught Biff Glasson on the point of the chin. Biff staggered back but held his balance and the two titans rushed in on each other.

The fighting around them had momentarily stopped. Both the River Rats and the Bridge Twisters forgot for the instant their ancient red-stained hatred as their two idols began to slash and jab and smash and rip. Now they were close in, now one staggered back.

With a terrific lunge, Cyclone Tim drove his knife deep into the belly of his rival—and in that lunge he ran his vitals into the long, sharp, dago dirk of the other. Then both men stag-

gered back a step and each tried to summon the strength for a fresh attack, but each reeled, stumbled and fell. Their bodies touched each other.

"You got me, Biff," hoarsed Cyclone Tim as he sprawled on the blood-spattered asphalt.

"An' you got me, Tim," Biff Glasson's voice rattled out.

"S'long, Biff. God damn you!"

"S'long, Tim. May your dirty soul roast in Hell!"

They were still even.

And then came the piercing blasts of the police reserve sirens as a hundred cops and dicks raced in from both ends of the block.

CHAPTER XIX

Polack Annie drew the receiver more closely to her crimson lips.

"Are you sure you told him it was me, Miss X, callin'?"

The Gillespie butler icily assured her that he was—that he had.

"Well—will you take a message to him? Tell him I said I got to hear from him right away—it's deadly important—get that? Just repeat my words—don' make up no elegant ones o' your own—deadly important—he knows where to reach me—an' I said right away . . . I'll be waitin'."

Annie lit a cigarette.

"This is some kind o' cookoo gink," she mused. "He blows me swearin' he'd croak for me an' wants to marry me, then he chances his life for that s'ciety twist—hasn' called me in two days an' won' answer when I call him."

Annie's situation was complicated enough.

Five minutes before she had telephoned Tommy for the twentieth time since their separation, Silk Freeman had left her suite in his Napoleon Hotel.

He had been in a hyena humor.

He had snarled out to her everything—how McClosky had been insanely desperate enough to invade the stronghold of B. B. himself, kill two of his men, wound old Pete and kidnap his $100,000 hostage, Alice Schuyder; how the McClosky gorillas had attacked his crack waterfront forces and killed Biff Glasson and four of his mob and wounded a dozen more. He had grinned—too like a hyena—only as he told her he had stolen back his $1,000,000 in smuggled and pirated heroin, and Glasson had knifed Cyclone Tim to death, and the boys had put away forever five of Tim's River Rats.

"What about that Gillespie punk?" Silk demanded.

And Annie was stumped for an answer except a stall.

Freeman, himself, had no knowledge that Tommy had been shot in the leg in the raid on his windowless apartment fortress. Annie knew nothing of it either.

"You s'pose, Annie, that the swaddler smells somethin'—that he's duckin' you?"

"I can't imagine what or who could o' officed him. We was gettin' on copesettee . . . H-he wasn' by any chance in any o' that fightin' aroun' on Cherry Street, was he?" and she tried to disguise a glance of anxiety.

"No. What'd he have to do with that? McClosky was in with the Gillespies to fight the truckin' racket, but the Gillespies weren't in with McClosky on hi-jackin' my dope.

"Annie you got to get that sucker back again. He goes on the spot. An' you got to put him there."

His gunmetal eyes clarified any doubts she might have retained.

Freeman raised his voice:

"I'll get him an' knock him off if I have to surround his house on all four sides, batter down the doors with typewriters and rush in fifty guys to croak him in his old man's arms. After the way he raided my home, if I let that stooge live I don' think old Pete, himself, would talk to me. An' I wouldn' blame him."

"Gee—Silk—I had this college cub all but in

the bag, I told you. Gimme another couple o' days, anyways."

"Okay. See what you can do on the wire—I'll be back."

Tommy Gillespie lay in bed. His fever was subsiding. The trifling wound in his leg was not as simple as it had seemed. The lead had poisoned him with strange vindictiveness. The medico couldn't understand it. But he had caught it young and had been able to neutralize it.

Any illiterate gangster might have explained it to the learned surgeon. The bullet had been coated with garlic, a trick worthy of only a rattlesnake or a gunman.

His wound didn't bother Tommy a tenth as much as did his puzzled conjectures about Annie.

Cyclone Tim had planted suspicion in the young fellow's heart at a turn when it was so gorged with love for the red-headed mystery that the ground was least fertile for hostile thoughts of her. A hundred times he had asked himself: Would this woman kiss him as she

had to lure him to a dirty death for that dirty killer, Silk Freeman? He had refused to answer her calls until he could decide. Her message might be bona fide or a frantic subterfuge.

Youth is trusting and love is disarming.

Tommy Gillespie sat up in bed. He slid his feet over the side, sneaked to the telephone and called. Annie answered.

"This is Mr. X," he whispered.

"Oh, perfect! Where've you—why haven't you—where'll I meet you when?"

"Half an hour—our place."

"Check."

Tommy closed his door, dressed, quietly, reached a side door and, in defiance of his doctor's order, left the house. He whistled for a taxi. His wounded leg forbade driving.

"See?" said Annie, as she put down the hand-set. "I haven't lost him."

"H'mmm—with you it's still maybe; with me it's absolutely. I told you before—hook me this fish an' land him, or I'll wade in and gaff him."

"I got to doll up, B. B. No time to give you no argument. I'm on my way to work."

She started dressing.

"Where's this you're gonna meet him?" asked Freeman.

"Oh, in the lobby o' the Astor—I'm afraid you wouldn't wanna make that the spot."

"Well—after that? Why not wash this up tonight?"

"I can't tell you yet. I guess I can steer him. But I got to make him think he's steerin' me—see? I could 'phone you——"

"Oke. Call home. Pete'll know where to reach me. Allow me half an hour an' I'll have a couple o' trusty lads at whatever place you say."

"That is if I can get him on a soft spot—like you said, where the getaway looks right for your boys."

"Say, I'm so steamed up—well, maybe you're right. It's Gillespie's pup, an' there might be a holler, so it won' hurt to play a bit safe."

Annie was making up her lips as only she knew how.

"Leave him to Annie," she sang out with a smile that was distorted by the lipstick, but was still plenty of smile. "When Annie goes

fishin' it's just like when she goes shootin'—she gets her man."

"Gee, you should," gasped Freeman, as he crossed the floor and slid his slender, strong arms around her, put his cheek against hers and looked at the picture of them in the mirror. "I've been damn busy lately, Chicago—but you ain't been out o' my mind much . . . soon as we clean up this Yale yap, you an' I'll take a spin down to Atlantic City for a few days—an'—wow!"

He turned her face enough toward him to kiss her lips, which left a smear on his face as scarlet as the smear on his soul.

"I got to be lammin' along now," she chirped, with a synthetic grin.

She adjusted her little hat, filliped out a few of her man-destroying red curls, blew him a kiss—and closed the door behind her.

There was a taxi out front—in front of Freeman's Napoleon.

"Astor Hotel," she ordered.

The driver let her out at the 45th Street side. She left him with the "ace" she tossed him. She saw him start up the west-bound way. She crossed through Peacock Alley, ignoring the

glances and smirks of ambitious mashers, tripped out the 44th Street door, up to the waiting east-bound cab, and whispered "Victory Hotel."

The driver turned and looked her over curiously, quizzically.

"Yes, ma'am," he consented.

The Big Boy had received the flash about Biff Glasson's finish in the waterfront fight—the battle of the two Goliaths, when Glasson and Cyclone Tim McClosky each killed the other—with stolid, stoic indifference.

"Just too bad about them hoodlums!" he sneered, and turned a cold, steely gaze on his lieutenant. "What about the dope—is it planted?"

"All unloaded an' salted in Millie Germaine's joint on 'Cocaine Row,' " chuckled the other, a nattily dressed little heel, with restless, thumb-tack eyes. Then: "Not one ounce missing."

"Oke," grunted Silk, lighting a cigarette and flicking ashes on his priceless Chinese rug. "Somebody's got to pay off for all this doin's. An' the guys who'll settle this trip are the

cokies an' the dopies who pick up this stuff. I gotta get mine for my grief."

"Sure, boss," smiled the other.

"Sure about what? I'm talkin'," stormed Freeman. "Instead o' mixing that junk with 10 per cent o' bicarbonate, like we always do—mix this with 40 per cent—now say 'sure.' "

"Forty per cent," whistled the other. "We're goin' to get a fierce kickback on that."

"You heard me!"—and Silk's word was final. The stooge bowed and blew, and Silk arose and strolled toward his desk, muttering to himself:

"It won't take much figgerin' to see that I stand to make plenty on the junk with a fifty-fifty divvy."

What if there would be lamentations from the cheated heroin addicts? They'd come back on Silk's dope distributors—on Nutsy Flemmen and others like him. Let Nutsy worry. Freeman got his money in advance.

He was himself again as the avaricious gleam settled in his eyes, and for the moment even Polack Annie and Tommy Gillespie and Alice Schuyder and his passions of love and hatred gave way before his driving greed—for money.

CHAPTER XX

Annie's taxi braked up before a shabby and colorless building, the Victory Hotel, on a side-street, West of Central Park in the 70's. The office was on the second floor. If one took the stairs, the clerk couldn't see from his regular position who came or went. Maybe that was why the Victory was usually crowded jam-full for all manner of illicit trysts behind locked doors in the dingy chambers.

Annie walked up. She turned at the fourth landing and unlocked the door of Room 444. As she threw the switch a single hanging bulb shot pale rays over a medium-sized room, with a bed, an armchair, a plain chair, a lame dresser, a washstand and a clothestree. The furnishings were in keeping with the exterior.

Annie whisked off her beret and her released hair lighted the place more than did the sickly drop-lamp. She fixed the ringlets with a few deft expert touches—and she turned at the sound of steps. The door opened and Tommy,

leaning on a cane, closed and clicked it behind him.

"Tommy boy!" she cried, and she ran to him.

But he did not stretch out his strong arms. He motioned her to sit, and he sat on the other chair.

"Annie," he began, "you and I must have a straight talk——"

"Yeh—sure. But—who hurt you? What is it?"

"Oh, I got that in Freeman's flat when we rekidnaped Alice. It's nothing."

"Tommy boy—before you spill yours, let me tell you what you got to know. Freeman has put the finger on you . . . you know what that means?"

"I—I think I do—I thought about it, myself."

"Your life ain't worth a nickel as long as he lives. He'll chase you thirty thousan' miles an' croak you in a church. Ord'narily, they drop you if you blow away, but when they're vindictive, the world ain' big enough to save you. Didn' they put Eddie Diamond on the spot in Denver after he quit an' went out West to die o' T. B., Tommy boy? Didn' they take Fat

Walsh in Miami, a long way from Broadway?

"Freeman has always killed for stric'ly business, an' bragged he had no passions. But he's found a few lately. An' among 'em, strong, is revenge!

"He hates your soul. Even if you give in an' let him muscle you out o' your own prope'ty, he'll still have you bumped off. Say —in my home town a gangster by the name of Nails Morton hired a horse one day an' went ridin' in Lincoln Park. The horse thrun him an' stepped on his head an' they picked up his body all bunged up.

"What do you think one o' the big shots in his mob went an' done? He goes to the same liv'ry stable, hires that same horse, rides him out to a lonely spot in the park, gets down, pulls a gat an' shoots the horse in the forehead!

"That's gang law."

"But—why do you tell me all this?"

"Because I love you, you damn handsome fool!"

She ran to him and knelt at his feet and turned up her fascinating face.

"Kiss me, boy," she breathed. And the hot

blood of youth and manhood burnt out all other considerations—doubts, fears, even self-preservation—when he answered the call of her crimson lips with his own.

"Tommy, lover," gasped Annie. "You don' know how I love you. But you will. I must show you. I must prove it to you . . . as long as Silk Freeman lives your death sentence hangs over you. So there's only one way out. . . . Freeman is got to die!"

Tommy looked down at her in amazement. How hotly this strange girl could talk of love and how coldly she could talk of death.

He wondered at himself, too . . . for, a fortnight back of him he would have shuddered at the idea of assassinating a human being. He had seen and heard much since then . . . He didn't shudder now . . . He was about to let her continue—but a few flashes passed through his brain. He held up his hand.

"Annie," he said, "I'm crazy about you. That I know. You say you are about me. I want to believe you."

"You WANT to believe me? My God! Lemme finish——"

"Not just yet. Freeman is as rich as he is

rotten. He can pay high. What assurance have I that all this you're telling me isn't an elaborate plan to win my confidence, stifle any possible suspicion and put ME on the spot?"

Annie laughed. And tears ran down her cheeks.

"You ain't wrong—much, Tommy boy; at this minnit—I'll tell you that part of it—Silk is waitin' a call from me that I've GOT you on a spot—an two killers is waitin' ready to come up an' settle you where I say."

Young Gillespie jumped up.

"What!"

"Sit down, Tommy boy—an' rest the sore gam. You ain't heard the half of it. I got nothin' against Freeman. He's been on the up-an'-up with me. I wouldn' double-cross him for dough or for nothin' on earth excep' one—an' that's you."

"You admit you're a double-crosser—and you want me to trust you—with my life the price of it?"

"Exac'ly. Your life is the price o' that trust. If you don' trust me, you'll pay with it. If you do, I'll buy it for you—with Freeman's life."

"J-just what is your—h'm—plan?"

"I'm gonna kill Silk Freeman!"

"You? Yourself? Why, you—surely——"

"Never mind, lover. I never told you before, but it won' be no virgin job for me. I'm all p'pared."

"But—why yourself? I can't——"

"Who else can I get to do it? I can't go to Freeman's men. They'd cut my throat before I got out o' the room. I can't let you—because they'd find out an' run you down an' bang you off.

"I've laid up nights figgerin' this all out. I got it set like clockwork. Remember when I said I'd kill for you? I had it all in my noodle then.

"I'm gonna croak him for my Tommy boy in the mornin' . . . one more night with you—the last!"

Tommy was bewildered and dizzy.

"Why the last? If you love me——"

"The last! I can't do this wit'out leavin' a trail like a truck t'rough a sand pile. If they ketch me they'll take me for a ride an' kill me an' weight my carcass with lead an' sink me in a river. But they won't. I got my getaway all framed pretty, too. I can disappear. I ain'

got no identity, anyway. You have. Tall Tom Gillespie's kid can't disappear. Polack Annie —yeh, that's my monicker, lover—can take on a new name an' a new racket an' a new country, too—an' what'll hurt worse'n all the rest'll be—she can take on new hair!"

"Oh—you wouldn't!"

"Yep. Got to. I'll be the mos' famous redhead aroun' the globe an hour after they pick up Silk Freeman's body. But I'll be a brunette by then. So look at the old flamin' top good—it's givin' its last show—to an audience o' one."

Tommy stared at her. He was only a boy. His brief underworld contacts had not really hardened him or changed his nature. He adored this thrilling, astonishing and electrifying woman who had the dimpled body of a child, the irresistible beauty of a siren, the courage and brutality of a gangster—this girl who could betray and murder and sacrifice and love—this blend of passion and romance and treachery and manslaughter.

He could no longer seriously doubt her. She had come clean to him—had confessed that there was murder in her heart, had admitted she had done murder before, had frankly

granted that she had taken an assignment from Freeman to win him and lead him into the path of the garlic-soaked bullets which this time would pierce him in spots more vital than his calf.

And she was holding out her arms to him—those shapely white arms born to embrace a mother and a lover rather than to support the deadly weight of gun-metal and lead.

"Tommy boy," she whispered, "you're not the first man I ever loved. I did love one—my Edgewater Kid. They chopped him down with typewriters becus I loved him. Many a tough guy went down never to stand up again over that. But even the Kid wasn' to me what you are to me.

"He cared for me—sure. But he was a gangster, after all, an' I was his kind. He gimme his life—an' he done it with his eyes wide open—an' that was all he had to give. But you—you're young, you're rich, you're ejucated—an' you're engaged to a s'ciety twist——"

"I'm not! That's all over!"

"Fine. I'll pay you off for that, too, before sunrise. You—Thomas Gillespie, Jr., you asked me to marry you!"

"I did. I meant it. I mean it now!"

"I know, lover. It's impossible. I knew that all along. But you asked me—an' you wasn' jus' good-timin' me—me, Polack Annie. From that moment, boy, you owned me. You touched a spot that never was touched before—a spot I didn't even know I had. You put yourself on THAT spot. Thank the saints it was me Freeman picked to put you on another kind.

"Boy, I'll clip Freeman with a smile on my pan like I did Kinky King when I thought he banged off my Kid an' like I did Goldie Gorio with his own gold-plated gats when I knew he did. I write my own laws, too, an' I'm my own judge, jury an' executioner. But you'll live. Hah—you'll be the finish o' Silk Freeman—an' that's more'n all the coppers an' enemies an' crooked rats in his own mob can ever say—an' any one of 'em would o' did it a million times if they'd had the guts.

"He's got 'em hypped, I tell you. They think he's more'n human. If he was in China, they'd jump at their own shadows. But we'll see if he's human or not. We'll see if he'll bleed. Maybe he'll bleed ice-water—but he'll bleed—in the mornin'—lover, turn out that light!"

CHAPTER XXI

THERE had been no sleep. The sun was up. And through the sooty curtains of room 444 of the Victory Hotel, Polack Annie and Tommy Gillespie met the daylight.

"You got to scram now, lover boy," said Annie, gently. "Kiss me good-bye . . . I don't think we'll ever meet again."

They had said much through the night. Game as he was, the young fellow had finally accepted Annie's desperate, deadly plan—she had convinced him that it was Freeman's life or his—and she had convinced him that she would take Freeman's and save his.

He strained her to him in his athletic arms and he choked on his high emotions. Their lips were glued together in the last passionate kiss —the last of a thousand through the long, short night.

Then she opened the door.

"Good-bye, Annie," he half sobbed. "May the Lord be good to you!"

She kissed his hand—then closed the door behind him.

She closed the door behind the only living man on earth she loved, the only honest man who had ever loved her. She closed the door, too, on any peace or profit that New York might have held for her. And on her identity. And on her crowning glory—her red hair—which had sent many good men into frenzy and many bad men to their graves.

As though to steel herself, she locked the door.

And, with one last sigh as she looked toward it, she turned—and went to work. For there was much work to be done this morning—and not nice work.

From her handbag she took out a package of dye. She coated a comb with it and started running it through her hair over and over again. The natural color resisted the first assault, but as she dipped and dragged the vandal comb down and down and down again, it began to give in. Soon that storied hair became an unrecognizable, dark, nondescript brown. She was still beautiful—but she was no longer Polack Annie.

Now she put on gloves, so no fingerprints would show, and took from her bag some other things. One was a blued revolver, not of the latest type. In her other hand she held a shiny something that looked like an elongated eye-cup. She adjusted the thin end of it over the muzzle and it settled with a click. It was a silencer, practical for the sort of assignment Annie had given herself.

She pumped a shot into her pillow. It worked! There was a noise like the spitting of an angry cat. That was all.

Annie picked up the telephone.

"H'lo," answered Silk. "Why didn' you call las' night? Where's my sucker?"

"He jus' lef' me. Listen, Silk, I can't spill on the wire, see? I've got to talk to you. An' I can't leave here. I'll explain when I see you. Can you come right over? An' come up alone —I am. I'm in 444, Victory Hotel—you know——"

"I know. I own a piece of it. Why can't you leave?"

"Becus I'm standin' by here for a buzz on the 'phone from him—get it? When that comes, and it'll be any minute now, I'll have

him where I want him—an' he'll wait. It's surefire an' foolproof."

"H'm—okay—I'll be over in a half hour."

Annie unlocked the door. She opened the window and went out on the fire escape. She climbed down one floor and looked into 344. Yes, everything was copesettee. The window was open. Her getaway looked clear. She passed through the room, went up the main stairs and was again in 444, which she had chosen as the execution chamber for Silk Freeman. He had better rooms than that in his garage.

She put on her hat and was about to unleash the curls she always displayed with practiced carelessness. She sighed and left them hat-locked. She tumbled everything back into her bag—except the ugly blue gat and its shiny-nosed appendage.

Annie returned to the fire escape, drew the soiled curtains together, and stood watching the door. She raised her pistol and gauged the range. She visioned Freeman entering—he stepped fast—he would trot in briskly and, not seeing her, would look surprised and search the room with his eyes. If he was still able to.

For she proposed to work with dispatch. If Freeman should see her before she pumped one into him—he was resourceful; he might dive under the bed or turn and run out again.

He never packed a rod—she knew that. His bodyguards were his gun-bearers. No punk copper or rube sheriff looking for a quick rep was going to put over on him an unexpected frisk and rap him on the concealed weapon joke. No, he wouldn't kill her—then!

She piped her wrist watch. The half-hour had passed and three minutes more. More minutes. And more. What could have happened? Promptness was one of Freeman's few virtues.

She didn't dare leave her post or position. Any second now he might turn the knob. What the——

Silk Freeman, the Big Boy himself, strode out of his Park Avenue apartment building, flanked by his armed pair of twin killers. One of them leaped to the wheel of his imported palace on tires. Its glistening, glittering sides were bullet-proofed with steel sheetings between the layers of exterior veneer and interior velour. The windows were bullet-proof and shatter-

proof. The passengers' seat was low and deep in the back of the limousine and those who sat there were invisible from the side and rear.

Through the 66th Street Transverse of Central Park the noiseless engine carried the unholy three at an even pace.

Behind Silk Freeman's regal carriage was a less pretentious sedan. Only in the crowded traffic of mid-Manhattan could such a mean competitor have kept up with the Hispano-Suiza. But if one had looked down from an airplane and watched the progress of the notorious racketeer from the time he left his home, one might have observed that the cheap vehicle was never far behind. Nor was it when Freeman's man popped out to turn the handle for him before the Victory Hotel. It drew up to within a foot, and two doors opened, and out of them vomited seven men. By this time Freeman's back was turned and he was on the way in.

The hoodlum in the lead of the seven pursuers wagged a wicked machine gun. The other six were armed with automatics. They raced in. Freeman's bodyguards, who had been instructed to wait outside, were so stunned they

couldn't even try to head them off. But they advanced cautiously as far as the outer door.

Freeman was already on the floor, perforated with a dozen bullets, and the assassins were tracking back for their car. The bodyguards, outnumbered, dogged it. They jumped aside and let the murderers, who turned toward no one in their haste, make their machine and get under way—and away.

Then they rushed in and picked up the bleeding, scarcely conscious Freeman. People were now scrambling down the stairs. The whole operation had not taken 40 seconds.

"It was Nutsy—Nutsy Flemmen," hoarsed the chauffeur.

"Yeh—I know," wearily whispered Freeman. "Get me out o' here—get me home—oh——"

They turned to carry him to his car, but two uniformed policemen entered just then.

"Hold it," ordered one of them. "Nobody leaves here. You two guys——"

He had caught a glance of the bloodless face of the victim.

"Lord help us!" he gasped. "It's B. B.!"

"Who done this?" demanded the other.

"I dunno," answered both the bodyguards, in unison.

Officer Hillis clumped to the office and 'phoned in a bulletin—it wasn't long—other, higher officials would get the details for themselves later.

But what a bulletin it was! Destined to turn the proud metropolis inside out and upside down; to roar from the throats of newsboys and from the headlines of newspapers the globe around; to make many a man go pale and many another hug himself.

Officer Hillis, this simple and momentous duty done, started through the hotel. The lower floors yielded little—nobody knew anything, nobody had seen anything, nobody had done anything, nobody had heard anything. But on the fourth floor he tried the door of 444—it was unlocked—he entered.

Annie raised her pistol and took aim. Then she caught herself. This wasn't Freeman. It was a harness bull! She started back on the fire escape, but Hillis heard her.

"Wait where you are," he shouted.

He dragged her back into the room.

"An' who an' what might YOU be?" he asked.

Annie was rattled, but not enough so to answer him. She had heard nothing and knew nothing—and said nothing.

"Come on—what was you doin' there jus' now?"

Annie managed a painful smile.

"See my lawyer," she said.

"Come with me," he said.

Nutsy Flemmen was back in his loft, far up in the Bronx.

"Dey seen us," he said to Brady Gregor, one of his gorillas.

"Who seen us?"

"Freeman's men—two of 'em—I seen them. But I was too shaky to shoot it out. At dat, we oughta stopped an' croaked 'em. We'll all go on the spot for dis now. But I'd let 'em stan' me again' a wall before I'd let dat lousy chiseler get away wit' de deal he hands me.

"I kick in fifty good grand to him—cold dough—for dat much wort' o' coke. Den I find it's cut wit' almos' half bicarb. I hail 'im on de 'phone an' he gives me de laugh, an when I

says he's gotta come across wit' coke fit for a white man to use or sling back my jack, he says for me to go to hell.

"Well, if I do, he'll be dere on de reception c'mittee!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE panic was on!

Silk Freeman, whose tainted, tenuous tentacles had squirmed into and gripped every element in the private and public life of great Greater New York, was kicking off in a bedbuggy hospital—his unclean clay withering under the slashes and gashes of the slugs from the machine-gun and automatics of a mysterious mob.

As he wriggled dying, there writhed the wreckage of the city's magnificent shame. Bankers wondered and worried; gangsters got gooseflesh and ducked under cover; women blinked suddenly out of their hop and their hootch and their kept security, and speculated on what was to become of them; an old established store of enviable reputation slammed its doors and the investigators found that it had been only a smug blind for Silk's smuggling activities.

B. B., who they had always said he had his of-

fice under his hat and his heart under control, was skidding down the short, one-way Westbound street with no turns, right or left. And the green signals were set and Death knew no speed laws.

The newspapers were yowling. They never had fought Freeman. They had known plenty about him. But they knew plenty about plenty of local institutions. If the Statue of Liberty had keeled over and her light gone out they would have turned the light of publicity on the remnants of the romance and glamor of that perpendicular old lady without a sense of humor or a sense of pity. Silk was as conspicuous and as fallen a manifestation.

And he was croaking the good croak—and his sardonic, sneering, bloodless lips were wreathed in a sallow smile at the slick dicks and the domineering District Attorney, who had solemnly gone through the pious ritual of asking him foolish questions.

Old Pete, the ex-convict vassal of the Big Boy, had blustered and bleated. There had been the unescapable mysterious telephone call an hour or less before the knock-off, the aged servitor had heard his master check back, as

he always did, and the call had come from a beautiful, titian-topped girl Freeman had of late played furiously—a crimson-headed female from Chicago called Polack Annie! And what a monicker that was for headlines.

The Chicago correspondents had choice data on Polack Annie. She had been the sweetie of Kinky King, chief of the West Side gangsters, and she had banged him off. She had lived with the Edgewater Kid and the Kid had been massacred on the spot. Goldie Gorio, the racket-boss, had raided and stuck up Central Detail and paralyzed the town and kidnaped her. His whole mob had been typewritten without benefit of carbon paper while he was in his suburban fort making lurid love to her. The Chief of Police had come in on them and had clipped Goldie with his own gold-plated gats. (Yeah? Like hell he had! Annie had!)

And where now was this flaming femme? the papers asked. She had disappeared. And wouldn't she? Hadn't she graduated from the Uniperversity of Chicago?

But who then was this brunette who had been nailed in room 444 of the dingy Victory Hotel, where Freeman had been sprawled out

so ignobly in the lobby by the hail of hot lead? She would give no explanation other than that her lover had deserted her. They had registered "Thos. Livermoor and wife." A revolver had been found in the air-shaft beneath the window in the $6-a-day suite—paid up in advance. Officer Hillis said he had seen the pretty woman throw something away.

The serial numbers on the rod had been traced—and the police had learned that the weapon had been bought in New Jersey by no one else than Freeman! There was a Maxim silencer on the gat—and what the hell could that mean? One cartridge had been exploded and that was a further mystery. Where had that bullet landed—and who had triggered it?

Two men, said to be Silk's bodyguards, were held as material witnesses. They hadn't seen a thing. One, his chauffeur, had driven him to the hotel. The other was his chauffeur's boyhood friend. They had entered the hotel to wash their hands a short time after Freeman went in—and they had stumbled over his groaning form. They were very much shocked. Why would Mr. Freeman, who was in the real estate and insurance rack—h'm—business—need any

bodyguards? Who would want to kill a man who was so regular and liberal to others?

The newspapers were having a grand time with all the red-heads on Broadway. The Police Commissioner had sapiently spilled that he suspected who the young woman was and that she was a showgirl—but that was only a blind shot, because showgirls and gangsters are supposed to flock together. No red-head on Broadway missed her share in the scandal, and each showgirl was pestered and ridden by reporters and detectives. And few could alibi their own private affairs.

Red hair became very unpopular.

One girl got on the front pages and into a police cell when a beauty parlor owner told how she had ordered that he dye her flaming red hair black. She was only able to clear herself after she had tearfully told her story—and the story involved a broker who was married, and whose wife, too, was hunting "a mysterious red-headed showgirl."

Tommy Gillespie read the newspapers and wrote his own theories. Annie had told him she had intended to dye her incendiary red

hair. And she had told him, too, that she would murder Freeman. Obviously she hadn't. But Tommy believed that she had put him on the spot, somehow, for the murderers.

Anyway, she had gone the route for him, her Tommy boy. His enemy was tripping on the threshold of Hell. The girl had not double-crossed him. Tommy knew it. He would shout it to a hundred million people if necessary.

Still they wouldn't understand. He couldn't quite—either. But this much he knew—she, of a dirty world, had come clean with him!

And how the D. A. turned up evidence! He found so much, everyone agreed that Freeman had really lived too long. He had been engaged in a comprehensive dope traffic—he had smuggled Chinks—he had extorted and perverted and corrupted—he was a very naughty citizen! The police had clues, the newspapers had hunches, the prosecutor had plans and the burg had a head-ache.

Frank McQuade, for 35 years a police reporter at Headquarters, numbered among his acquaintances more racketeers, gunmen, thieves and heels than the Chief of Detectives or a

bail bondsman. Hard-boiled, cynical, wise. In his time he had covered many murder mysteries—the Rosenthal slaying, the Elwell killing, the Dot King tragedy—the best of them. He had dug up evidence in many a case that his paper had never printed. And, way back, years ago, he had sat in at that conference where $10,000 was slapped down to engineer the escape of Harry Thaw from Matteawan.

One evening, several days after the morning when Silk Freeman was laid out and slithered by slugs in the lobby of the verminated Victory Hotel, and Polack Annie was copped by a harness bull, McQuade called his office from the reporters' room in the shack just behind Police Headquarters.

"There was a reason in a thousand people's noodles why the B. B. should be bumped off," he told his city editor. "He was hooked up in every kind of racket in town. But I think the woman angle was all cockeyed. You want theories? Okay, boss—I'll get you forty good, airtight theories—and everyone'll be surefire—and wrong . . . Yeah, I know it's a good story and you can't libel Freeman."

So McQuade waddled around the corner and

threw in a drink. And after he had taken six he called his office back—in time for the mail edition.

"Here's the real lowdown on why the Big Boy was shot," he explained to a rewrite man.

"You mean killed—he just died," corrected the rewrite man.

"Yeah? Well, here it is just the same: Silk Freeman had New York by the—he was running every racket in town. And he was gettin' ambitious. He was laying plans, big plans, to start muscling in on the musclers—from coast to coast. He was going to let them work their big and little rackets, and he'd work the workers, big and little. He'd already started in on Chicago, and it was a tough Chicago bunch that clipped him. They did it in regular Chicago style. He wanted to be the racketeer Czar and he got what the Czar got. Capone's behind it. That's that. And that's all."

He paused.

"And if you don't like that—here's another good theory——"

CHAPTER XXIII

B. B.'s DEAD!

Before front pages shrieked it out in huge, box-car type, through the mysterious underworld wireless grapevine etherized the whispering message that Silk Freeman was washed up—he had toppled into Hell itself, head first—until that he had always landed on his feet.

The news went sizzling through the town, and it caused a flurry in Wall Street and up and down the luminous lane called Broadway. Silk's businesses and Silk's rackets and Silk's manipulations had been various and devious. The big shots in the underworld made themselves scarce and the big shots in the business world, many of them, found reasons for long deferred vacations.

Silk alive, most everyone was safe—notwithstanding the evidence. Silk would never bleat. But Silk dead—that was another matter. Especially with such a personality as Silk, with so many enemies he had wrecked and so many

allies he had made. Alive, little was known of Silk's private life and Silk's private vices and Silk's private whims—little known of his loves, his hatreds and his methods. When his book of life was closed it snapped open for public reading.

Marty's restaurant, one of Silk's pet hangouts, went dark, and the putative owner fled to Chicago. When it was found he owed the Big Boy $80,000, the executors of the estate foreclosed on his fashionable uptown apartment building and a huge sign was flaunted there, to the consternation of the tenant snobs, shrieking that the property was seized by the Freeman estate and would be auctioned off. The gat had bowed to the hammer.

At the apex of the excitement the Chief of Detectives, a superannuated veteran, resigned, ostensibly because of ill health, but for some deeper and dirtier reason. He had been friendly with the Big Boy in days gone by. About two days gone by.

The lights of a revue on Broadway flickered out, and then it was learned that the devil, Silk, had been the angel of the show. The legitimate builders in Brooklyn, who had lost in the past

month millions of dollars' worth of property when their unfinished apartment houses were put to the torch, breathed more freely because the attempt to muscle in on their business had died when Silk had died.

Creditors frantically framed how they would salvage from the wreckage the money due them, and chiseling debtors schemed how they could cheat out of paying. Every man for himself now.

And Polack Annie—don't worry!

The flatfoots were dragging her out every day—now to the D. A.'s office, now to the Victory Hotel, now to Freeman's Park Avenue apartment. They had shoved her face to face with old Pete. He had recognized her even without her wicked, fiery hair. But she had floated him off his flat feet with her flaming eyes . . . and when the assistant to the man who sends the chumps to stir had faced him and yelled: "Do you know this woman?"—he had swallowed his antiquated Adam's apple and answered: "Never seen 'er in me life!"

Annie wasn't feeling so hot. In the wagon, on the way to the station on the day Silk's obit had been written on the loaded typewriter, she

had swallowed the sickening remainder of the hair dye. And she knew that without another application her tresses would soon burn again. Which must be extremely embarrassing. But Annie hadn't dyed her wits.

The cops kept on raking the ashes. Silk Freeman had been brawled up with Tall Tom Gillespie. Everybody knew that. They had a few of the River Rats still in clink from that Cherry Street shindy . . . Sure, Gillespie admitted that Freeman had tried to strong-arm in on his business, and that he had arranged with Cyclone Tim McClosky and other "independent" teamsters to carry on. That was all he knew about it. He was a very, very busy and respectable citizen, and his word went—that was that. And that ended that.

Tommy didn't confide in his dad any more. He had a fair idea of who that reticent brunette might be. He tried to see her, even after he had convinced himself that he should duck the mess, and the Department of Correction laughed at him. He tried to get Annie on the 'phone, calling her under the name of Mrs. Thomas Livermoor—but that was too ridiculous. He only got Irish impertinence.

So, in one last, desperate effort, he shot Annie a wire:

MRS. THOMAS LIVERMOOR,
DETENTION HOME
WEST FIFTY-FOURTH ST.,
NEW YORK CITY
AS A SYMPATHIZER AND BELIEVER IN YOUR INNOCENCE I OFFER FURNISH BAIL STOP PHONE YALE CLUB AND ASK FOR NUMBER OF MR X STOP SAME WILL BE SUPPLIED YOU STOP I DON'T WANT TO INTERFERE BUT WANT TO HELP DISTRESSED GIRL PUT ON WRONG SPOT STOP CAN'T KIDNAP YOU BUT SEE RED ALWAYS. MR. X.

And, Polack Annie, the brunette, got the wire. She received it and she got it.

As the police matron (who had read it first) handed it to her, her seductive mouth twisted and twitched to a smile.

"See?" she gurgled to the matron, who was a bit titillated over her sensational prisoner, "Here's one grand guy what wants to spring me."

The beefy matron read the telegram again—twice.

"They's some goofs," she confided, "who go haywire over newspaper hooey. Don't trust 'im, sister. That babe is out for a kick. What if it does set 'im back a few grand? He wants the broad what's starred in the Freeman case. Six-to-an'-even he's fifty, bald, fat an' can't stay out all night—doctor's orders—and—but use yer own judgment."

Annie stretched for a cigarette and the yellow flame lit up her oval olive face. She dragged in the smoke and blew it out and looked at the soft-hearted, hard-boiled matron—and then she breathed, without any facial ameliorations or amplifications:

"Lissen, copper—was you ever in love—much?"

The matron tossed her head in scorn.

"Much?" she demanded. "I got eight kids."

Annie flicked the cigarette.

"Then why're you workin'?"

"Becus—I got eight kids."

"An becus you're in love—with your eight kids! Take a sweet earful o' this, from a smart tart—I ain't tippin' you who I am—but maybe you guessed I ain't no sappio. Them delirious dicks can tap the wires, but they might bust

their eardrums—anyway, this here 'X' guy's gonna cop a call—do I or don't I, Ann Pennington?"

The matron glanced furtively about. She leaned forward and whispered, hoarsely:

"You—DO!"

"Okay," said Polack Annie. "Call up the Yale Club—c'nect with this Mr. X and say for him to go home and stay home till he hears from ME!—here's the nickel to get the op'rator!"

And Annie palmed her a fifty-buck bill.

They dragged Polack Annie over to the D. A.'s office again and the dicks seemed to take a degenerate delight in closing their duck-bill fingers into the soft, warm flesh of her arm. She passed that. The stage was set and the flashlights boomed and the egg-eyed mob looked on as they led her into the Criminal Courts Building. Under the Bridge of Sighs they steered her into the marble-lined lobby and up to the D. A.'s office.

Annie didn't mind. This was nothing new to her, and all these clucks with their trick questions and their concealed stenographers and

their unconcealed Blackstones didn't fuss her—she was heeled with the cunning of her kind and her training, the foxy ingenuity of the gangster girl who didn't know nothin'—but knew plenty.

And they sat her at a desk and they lit her cigarette and they peppered queries at her.

"What's your name?"

"Jane Doe—a jane wit' dough"—and the D. A., who personally popped the questioning, dropped his eyes before her sardonic gaze.

"Put it down: Mrs. Thomas Livermoor," directed the D. A.

"Come on—tell yer right name," came the growling voice of a dick at her side.

"Call me Pansy, Dickey—now what's yours?" and Annie puffed at her cigarette.

"You registered at the Victory Hotel with a tall, blonde fellow——"

"My sweetheart—but he moved away—he was my man, but he done me——"

"How about this gun?" and the D. A. fumbled a blue .38 calibre revolver with a shiny Maxim silencer.

"Never seen it before," said Annie, "or any other——"

"And the silencer——"

"I wish I had one to slap on your kisser——"

"Did you know Silk Freeman?"

"Never heard of him. Was he really silk, or just rayon?"

The D. A. sank back and asked one more, hopeless question:

"WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS CASE?"

"All right, I'll play—what do YOU know about this case?"

The high inquisitor turned purple.

"Take her back!" he cried.

"Front!" called Annie, with a snap of the fingers—to the dicks.

CHAPTER XXIX

Polack Annie's message reached Tommy Gillespie.

And it made him feel like such a kid—not her Tom—her Tommy boy—just a helpless, hopeless kid. For she had saved his life and she had staked hers for his. She had exacted for his own inconsequential life the life of Silk Freeman, New York's higher-than-law. She had thumbed her pert nose into the ugly pan of the electric chair. She had outwitted the most torturous Torquemadas, the most determined detectives and the most unscrupulous gangsters. This bad girl had been a good man to him—and what a woman!

In his breed were the chromosomes of Irish kings. In his nature ran a royal pride. Yet he burned with glory that Annie had gone so far for him—and he burned with futility that she had to and he could do not a damn thing for her.

The 'phone message from the matron at the

Detention Home had convinced him that she—the girl over whom millions speculated, whose every mien and every yawn was front page copy—had understood and was responding.

She had said to wait. If she hadn't said anything he could have followed his own urge and judgment. But she had said he must wait. It was pretty hard, this admonition tempered with love and determination; but he would wait. She could manage their affairs—their affair—better behind steel bars than he could in the whole outside of an unhampered wide world! He would wait—but his Irish irked him. H'm. H'm.

Polack Annie sat before a bare table in the squad-room of the women inmates of Detention Home, playing solitaire. The brawny matron, a copper in her heart, watched her to see that she didn't cheat.

"Jack o' Hearts!" cried the ebullient Annie, "my love card!"

"How d'you know? This 'Mr. X' may not be blond at all."

"Lissen, Colleen Moore, one o' the rackets I'm way up in is complexions. I can tell from

his telegram he's blond. He writes him a mighty blond telegram, that mick."

"Maybe he is a blond, umpchay. But what makes you think he's a mick? Because he uses 'X,' which might stand for Xavier?—he didn't use 'Mc'—that would o' been Hibernian for sure."

Annie laid a nine of spades on a ten of diamonds and moved the pile over on the jack of clubs.

"That gives me a space," she triumphed. "If the four o' di'monds ain't buried as deep as Silk Freeman is gonna be, I might make this hand come out."

"Silk Freeman? Say, goodlookin', I got a fair idee you could spill who knocked off Silk, at that."

Annie jumbled the cards in a heap. The four of diamonds was interred beyond redemption.

"I'll tell you somethin'," she confided. "Somethin' I never coughed up to the D. A., or to the Chief o' Dicks. I know plenty about Freeman. I could give them newspaper boys some front-page stuff they'd have to print on asbestos. But I swear to you as much as I swear I love one man, an' I want him t' love

me, that if I know who clipped Silk Freeman, I hope I join him in hell—wit'out asbestos! Is that good enough?"

"Better'n good—perfect. Who you think done it?"

"Get this, sister—I'll never go to hell for thinkin'!"

Tommy had his hat and coat on. He was on his way. He could stomach no more inactivity, no more noncombatant waiting. He heard the 'phone. It might be Annie. He stopped, turned back, answered. It wasn't Annie. It was Alice Schuyder.

"Tommy, dear," she gurgled, and Tommy had never heard this cold, passionless creature talk that way before, "I think I know who the mysterious red-head is in the Freeman scandal —remember?"

"I'll never forget," brutally.

"So you see who and what . . . and, of course, so do I . . . now, Tommy, dad just talked to me in a brotherly way, and I see that dad's right and I'm wrong . . . I'm sorry I was so drastic with you that night—I was up-

set and unstrung. After all—well, Tommy boy——"

"Don't YOU call me Tommy boy!" shouted Tommy.

"I—I never did before. All rightie—I never will again."

"Thanks," curtly.

"Then that's settled—now, to continue what we were discussing——"

"WE—are you Lindbergh?"

"Don't be rude. The interrupting interlude in our long plans has ended. You were wrong, you must confess it. I was wrong, too, I suppose. Let's call all things even and continue where we left off——"

Young Gillespie's hands trembled as he held the instrument. "Get this, jane!" he barked, "you said I was a hoodlum. Well, you don't know what the hell this is all about. An' there ain't no reason why you ever should know. You're yellow inside and outside. I helped spring you an' I risked my life to do it. That's okay with me. Now, don't get in my hair. You're washed up—out—back in circulation. Scram, sister—blow—breeze—can you inhale

that, or do I have to send it to you on a baby-blue engraved card with no R. S. V. P.? Or will I just hang up on you?"

He didn't have to—she hung up on him.

Young Gillespie strolled out to the garage and got out his roadster. He made Detention Home in ten flat. He found the outside door open to anybody and the inside door closed to everybody. Tommy looked up and down and around, and spotted a white push-button, an old-fashioned one. He jabbed on it. He waited. Then he thumbed it again. A woman dressed somewhat like a nurse opened a crack in the door.

"Who an' what do ye want?" she demanded.

"I want to see—h'm—Mrs. Livermoor."

"You an' the rest of the world. Are you her brother, mouthpiece, husband—or who-sis?"

"Say—er, Mr. X."

The matron stepped back half a stance. "Oh—h," she snorted. "Ye're Mr. X! Well, I'm her social chaperone an' yer wire oopset her sinsitive young nature. Saints alive—ye ARE blond—how the divil'd she guess it?"

Tommy Gillespie knew very little of the ethics or etiquette of police stations. But he

knew he was talking to an Irish woman.

"—I don't know," he stammered. "I don't know much anyway."

"Well, I can't let ye in," said the matron in a stagey undertone. "But I'll take any message to the girl friend. She's been up-an'-up wit' me."

"With you and everybody . . . tell her this: Mr. X is out here, ready to put up bail, ready to get her out, ready to—just say ready to—say he didn't finish it—there's no end TO it!"

"Go on wit' ye, young feller—I could finish it meself—what the—what do ye t'ink I am, anyway?"

"I hadn't given that any profound degree of speculation."

"Oh-h, hadn't ye? Isn't that just too burn-me-up bad?"

"Here," he said—and handed her a twenty-dollar bill.

"There's no Mrs. X booked here," she retorted, looking at the double saw-buck. Tommy handed her another twenty.

"M'm—she just come in—what's the message?"

"Tell her I adore her—I'm waiting—I can't

live without her—I'll go her bail for her and I'll go to hell with her—I'll—I'll—Tell her Tommy boy is downstairs—with his arms wide open—waiting—longing—tell her——"

"I'll tell her, mister—what is it you want me to tell her?"

"Oh, tell her it's me—I mean it's I—damn a college education—I. No, tell her it's Tommy waiting, ready to spring her when she wants to be sprung."

"Sorry," said the matron, with official dignity, "but it is against rigulations to carry them kind o' messages to prisoners . . . sorry."

"Oh—all right—here's another twenty, tell her——"

"You're vary careless wit' dough. But bein' the only son o'—whoa!—pardon me. Bein' young an' rich, I suppose ye can afford to buy yer toys."

Tommy caught the "act." He drew out a pencil and a sheet of paper.

"What's the use trying to kid you?" he laughed, as he paused in his writing. "Take this up to Mrs. X—you won't be sorry."

He had the human decency to attach two five-

spots to it and the matron had the human decency not to read the note—until she had closed the door.

Lady: Ready to bail you. Waiting and longing. Come to me. X.

And the matron carried it in to Polack Annie, who was taking a bath.

Not the sunken marble pool in Silk Freeman's eerie flat; not the gold-lined vat in Goldie Gorio's mansion.

Just a zinc tub in Detention Home—the delousing depot of the demi-monde dames.

Polack Annie, her hair no color at all, was all soap up to her nose and down to her toes. Her richly colored skin glistened from the water. The matron held out the note.

"Can't be annoyed," snapped Annie.

"It's from Tommy boy."

Annie dropped the soap and her petulance. She dried a hand on the matron's skirt and grabbed the paper. She read it, and then: "Gimme a pencil." She scribbled on the back:

X—Gee, thanx, beaudiful, But can't meet you till my dispusition turns back to its nachrel color. I know what hooked you, kid, and what hooked you, kid'll hold you,

kid. After all even love grand as it is can hang on a hair. Get me, kid? Shoot a shark around with the bail tomorrow. That'll be Thursdy. I'll evaperate till Sundy. Then stand by for a call. And when the call comes you'll come. And when you come you'll see red. Till then, to my big X—XXXXXX——

Mrs. Livermoor.
(Your X-Lover.)

Tommy Gillespie's brow was puckered as he read. Then it began to relax. Then he smiled, chuckled, laughed aloud.

He made a hop-skip across the walk and into his car. He started off. His heart beat high and his pulses pounded.

At the corner a mounted copper waved him back. "Who the hell you think you are?" he barked. A crowd blocked the crossing. Cars were passing. They kept moving, steadily, slowly, solidly. Signals changed, but no one could get by.

"The traffic in this village is getting more unspeakable every day," grouched Tommy Gillespie to a taxi driver who had pulled up beside him. "What's THIS jam all about?"

"That? Oh—that's Silk Freeman's funeral."

UNDERWORLD GLOSSARY

This appendix is compiled to include words and phrases used in my three latest books, "Gangster Girl," "Put on the Spot" and "The Big House," taking in the current argot of thieves, gangsters, racketeers, and convicts.

The abbreviations mean: (n.) noun; (v.) verb; (adj.) adjective; (var.) variant; (exc.) exclamation.

Ace (n.) $1. (Var.: berry, buck, caser.)
Ace of Spades (n.) A widow.
Airdale (n.) A faithful pal or associate.
All wet—Entirely wrong.
Angel (n.) A sucker who finances ventures for others, principally one who backs shows and cabarets.
Ankle (v.) To walk.
Ants in the Socks (adj.) Designating a person of energy and pep.

Badger (n.) The badger game is one of the oldest and the most cowardly of all swindles. It is operated through a woman who decoys a man into a spot where her confederate can catch them in a compromising position and, claiming to be her husband, shake the victim down for all the traffic will bear, then and there and often thereafter.
Bad News (n.) A bill or a restaurant check.
Bang Off (v.) To shoot.
Baptized Booze (n.) Cut liquor.
Beezer (n.) Nose.
Begeezes (adj.) High and mighty. (A gangster might speak of a "begeezes copper," meaning one arrogant and hard to approach. Probably a perversion of "By Jesus.")
Benny (n.) Overcoat.
Big Noise (n.) Anyone important.
Big Shot (n.) The head of a gang. (Now more generally applied to anyone who is of high standing and power.)
Bit by a Fox Wised Up.
Blessed (adj.) A crook reformed.
Blind (adj.) Date with unknown person, or any venture "in the dark."
Blister (n.) An old or ugly woman. (Var.: Bat.)
Blowoff (n.) The end.

Boloney (n.) Perversion of "bologna," meaning anything preposterous, incredible, unreasonable.
Book (v.) To have one's name entered at a police station on the "blotter," in which event the prisoner is in position to get out on bail. (Also a life sentence or anything meaning the limit—as in draw poker 5 cards, called "the book" is all one can draw.)
Booster (n.) Shoplifter. (Var.: Derrick.)
Boon with two strikes on Him—Physically or mentally undergrade.
Buzz (v.) To question and cross-question. (Also to telephone to.)
Bottle it (exc.) Shut up!
Bouncer (n.) A bad check that comes back.
Box (n.) Safe.
Bozo (n.) Tramp, bum, panhandler, any person of low standing.
Bracelets (n.) Handcuffs.
Break (n.) Act of destiny or fate; therefore, a "soft break" or a "tough break"; where just "a break" is used it means a good one.
Break (v.) To cause a policeman to be reduced or transferred.
Broad-Jumper (n.) One who abandons his woman. (A "broad" is a female and a "jumper" is a fugitive.)
Bugged Joint (n.) Any place protected by burglar alarms or wired for alarms by private detective agency systems.
Bujok (n.) A Central European, such as a Bohemian, Czech, Hungarian, Roumanian. (Var.: Bohunk.)
Bum steer (n.) False information.
Burn up (v.) To anger.
Button (n.) The point of the chin, vulnerable to a single blow.
Buzz (v.) To question and cross-question. (Also to telephone to.)

Cadge (v.) To beg or wheedle.
Can (n.) Jail or small-town calaboose.
Canary (n.) Prisoner.
Candle (v.) To burn up—get angry. (Var.: To needle.)
Canvass (n.) A line of talk to soften up a prospect for a swindle or racket; canvassing is also referred to as "educating" the victim.
Capper (n.) Similar to a "shill." More comprehensive, however, taking in any operator who serves to make a po-

tential racket more attractive to a chosen victim. The process is known as "Softening up a sap."

Carrying the Banner—Down and Out.

Caser (n.) One dollar. ("Case-note" is a $1 bill.) (Var.: "Frogskin," or "Ace.")

Cat (n.) A prostitute; a house of ill fame is a cathouse (also crib.

Charged up (adj.) Full of dope.

Cheaters (n.) Eye-glasses.

Chiseler (n.) One who will play the measliest of rackets and be satisfied with the chips and dust.

Chopper (n.) Machine gunner.

City College—The Tombs.

Clean (adj.) Broke.

Clean (adj.) Within the law.

Clink (n.) Jail.

Clip (v.) To kill. (Var.: Croak, get, settle, knock off, bump off—the last means with firearms only.) Also to rob or defeat.

Clown (n.) Rube sheriff.

Cluck (n.) A sucker.

Coal-oil Johnny (n.) A spender.

C.O.D. Boy (n.) A crook made inefficient because he falls for the frails. (Origin: "C.O.D."—"Crushed on Dames.") (A man unusually successful with girls is called a "Chicken butcher.")

Coffin (n.) A cell.

Coffin Varnish (n.) Deleterious hooch.

Cokey (n.) A user of cocaine.

Cold turkey (n.) Definite statement of fact.

Collat (n.) Anything negotiable.

Come clean (exc.) To tell it all honestly. (Var.: "Come through.")

Cooky (n.) Sweetheart.

Cop (v.) To get or steal or take.

Copesettee (adj.) Safe, O.K., all right. (Origin: This is an old stand-by of hotel sneak-thieves which has lately become of general use in all crookdom. In the Palmer House, Chicago, there was a big settee, and when the house detective (cop) sat there, he couldn't see the stairs or elevators. Its significance, therefore, was "The cop's on the settee.")

Cowboy (n.) One quick to shoot.

Crack (n.) A remark, instances: "He wise-cracked," or "He cracked out of turn."

Croak (v.) To kill. Also to die (intransitive.) (Var.: To put away.)
Croaker (n.) A physician or surgeon.
Cut up (v.) To divide the loot. (Var.: Divvy, split.)
Cutting Second. Taking unfair advantage.

Dead-pan (adj.) Revealing no expression. (Good poker-face.)
Deemer (n.) Dime.
De Wolf Hopper's Wedding Rings (n.) Brass Knuckles. (They have five holes for fingers; Hopper was married five times.)
Dick (n.) A plain clothes police officer.
Dip (n.) Pickpocket. (Var.: Booster, stripper. A dip who robs a woman is a "moll-buzzer.")
Dirt (n.) Scandal or exposure. (Disseminating such news is "Dishing the dirt.")
Ditch (v.) To lose or dispose of or rid one's self of a person or thing.
Dog it (v.) To get cold feet, turn coward.
Dogs (n.) Feet.
Doing the Houdini—Getting out of a tight place.
Doormat (n.) Coward.
Double team (v.) To close in on one victim, two enemies coming at him from two sides simultaneously.
Drag (n.) Influence ("pull"). Also a gathering of effeminate men; also a partner for a party, such as "She's my drag tonight," or "I'm dragging with her," etc.
Drink (n.) Ocean. (Var.: Pond.)
Ducat (n.) Ticket. (Var. Skull.)
Duck soup (n.) Anything easy and enjoyable and profitable.
Dukes (n.) Hands.
Dump (n.) A place, usually a low resort. (Var.: Dive, joint.)
Dutch (n.) The Dutch is suicide. Also "CKX," the telegraph code symbol for the word. Sometimes expressed "Taking the Dutch route."
Dynamite (n.) Anything dangerous. Also cocaine.

Edge (n.) An advantage.

Fall (n.) An arrest. ("Taking a fall" is submitting to arrest. "Fall dough" is a fund a gang has in reserve for defense of its members.) (Var.: "Jam." A crook in custody is "Jammed up." Being arrested and not booked on the police blotter or trial calendar is a "blind jam.")
Fanny (n.) Rump.

Fed up—Disgusted beyond further endurance or patience.
Fido (n.) A trusty in a prison.
Fin—Five. (From Yiddish word for that number, freely pronounced "finnif.")
Fink (n.) Traitor.
Fireproofed (adj.) One who has received the last rites of the church.
Flatfoot (n.) Pedestrian patrolman. (Those patrolling in police cars are called "Lizzie-lousies.")
Floater (n.) One who has no regular home.
Floating (adj.) Anyone under influence of cocaine.
Flock (n.) Plenty—a whole lot. There may be a "flock" of women, money, luck, time, or "boloney."
Floorless dance (n.) A hanging.
Flop (n.) A bed; also as a verb it means to fail.
Foreigner (n.) Any convict serving a social, sexual, or impulsive felony—not a professional criminal for profit.
Fourth of July (n.) Shooting; anything spectacular.
Fox (n.) Fugitive.
Frame (v.) To conspire; sometimes said "frame-up," either as noun or verb.
Frisk (v.) To search.
Front-guy (n.) A man of good appearance and approach who can scout for a tough mob without exciting suspicion.
Front office (n.) Private sanctum of the chief, either of a gang or a city.
1454—Disorderly conduct; number of old Chicago ordinance covering misdemeanor.

Gaff (v.) To cheat.
Gag (n.) A joke; also used similarly as verb.
Gams (n.) Legs.
Gat (n.) A magazine pistol. (Var.: Rod.)
Gee-gaws (n.) Race horses. (Var.: Bangtails.)
Ghoul (v.) To defeat. Perversion of "Goal."
Gig (n.) Gigolo.
Gimmick—Any contrivance to make a fair transaction or contest unfair.
Giraffe (n.) A curious or nosey person. (Improvement on the "rubberneck" of the 90's.)
Giving the Finger. Cheating. (Var.: To stick.)
Glimmer (n.) A black eye.
Glom (v.) To steal, or to see.
Go Democratic—Unfortunate and unexpected reversal. (If a

good result is expected and it turns out all wrong, the job "went Democratic.")

Go down the line—Meaning to go any distance for someone or to accomplish something.

Going South—To "go South" with money or property or even another man's girl is to steal the loot and hide it.

Goldfish (n.) Prisoners in the police line-up where detectives and potential witnesses may observe them without being themselves observed.

Goofer (n.) Gangster. (Perversion of "Gopher," name of a famous old-days New York gang.)

Goofy (adj.) Crazy. The noun is "goof" or "goofus."

Gorilla (n.) A gangster. (NOT "guerilla.")

Grand (n.) $1,000. ("Peaches" Van Camp, an international crook, always carried a $1,000-bill. He said it was impressive where the same amount in smaller currency got nowhere. One day he was telling about the scrapes got out of with $1,000 bills, and as he held one aloft he exclaimed, "Ah, yes, it's a grand note!" Thereafter a $1,000 "William" was a grand note, and now $1,000 is "a grand.")

Grapevine (n.) News that comes through confidential underworld sources without leaking to authorities, enemies, or outsiders.

Grease the Mitt—To pay graft or hush money. Sometimes just "to grease."

Grift (n.) Thievery. Not related to graft, which means proceeds or connivance with crooked authorities. A grifter is a swindler.

Gun (n.) A thief. (Has nothing to do with fire-arms, in fact is used for types of thieves who seldom use any. Origin, contraction of the Yiddish word, "Gunniff," meaning a thief.)

Gun-moll (n.) A thief's woman. (Not a woman who carries a revolver!)

Guts (n.) Courage.

Gyp (v.) To cheat with the aid of confederates or false representations in such a way as to remain within the law.

Handle (n.) A given name.

Hang-out (n.) Rendezvous.

Harness-bull (n.) A uniformed policeman. ("Harness" is uniform.)

Haywire (adj.) Crazy.

Heater (n.) Cigar.

Heavy-worker (n.) Safe-blower. (Var.: O'Sullivan, Muzzler.)
Heel (n.) A contemptible person.
Heeled (adj). Armed.
Heeler (n.) Small politician.
Heinie (n.) A German.
Hell (n.) Trouble, grief. Instance: "I got plenty of hell with her."
Hep (adj.) Aware, wise to, cognizant of. Instance: "He's hep to our plans."
He Pulled a Knife on Me—Designating a false alibi or defense. Originated with a story about a saloonkeeper on Twenty-second Street, Chicago, on whom some gamblers played a slick trick, bringing in a well-dressed dead body and setting it in a chair with the derby over the eyes as a "stew" and ordering champagne; they said the drunk would pay when he came to; the saloonkeeper waited, demanded, threatened, and then brought a bungstarter down on the derby. The "stiff" slumped to the floor. The gamblers rushed in, laid ears to his heart and cried "My God—you killed him!" And the saloonkeeper cried "Self defense—he pulled a knife on me!"
Herring (n.) Incorruptible girl. Herring was the name of the most famous of safes that couldn't be blown.)
Hick (n.) A yokel.
High pressure (adj.) Any method of trimming a chump which requires class, convincing argument, and "front."
Hi-jack (v.) To seize possession of contraband property belonging to another gang, usually by arms in transit.
Hoist (v.) High-class stealing, such as bank robbery or holding up a pay-wagon or registered mail-truck.
Hole (n.) The solitary confinement dungeon in a penitentiary.
Hooey (n.) Bunk.
Hoodlum (n.) A gangster. (Now frequently abbreviated to "Hood," pronounced like the first syllable of "hoodlum.")
Hook-up (n.) Combination.
Hop (n.) Morphine. (A hypodermic for injecting the drug is a "hop-gun," and an addict is a "hop-head.")
Hot (adj.) Anything important, strong, worth-while, or highly acceptable.
Hot (adj.) Anything stolen. (Instances: stolen diamonds are "hot ice," a stolen car is a "hot scooter," stolen property in quantity is "stew" or a "hot mess."
Hot and bothered (adj.) Excited, overenthusiastic.
Hot squat (n.) The electric chair.

Hot Hell (n.) Enthusiasm. (Hungry, greedy.)
Hustler (v.) Prostitute. (Also a racketeer.)

Ice (n.) Diamonds.
In (n.) *See* "Out"—this is the antithesis. (Instance: "I've got an in with the Chief.")
In the Bag (adj.) Any result which has been "fixed" in advance, irrespective of its merits, such as an arrest where police have secretly agreed to release the person, a trial where the judge or jury have been "squared," or a crooked race or prize-fight of which the outcome is certain.
In the Clear—Safe after danger of disaster has passed.
In the Money—Doing well.
In the Red—Losing money on a venture.

Jackroll (v.) To go through the pockets of a disabled, drunken, or sleeping man.
Jerv (n.) Vest pocket.
Jig (n.) Negro. (Var.: dinge, shine, smoke, boogie.
Jim (v.) To ruin or destroy or put out of commission.
John Law (n.) Policeman.
Jug (n.) A prison. Also a bank. As a verb, to imprison.
Jump the Fence—To forfeit a bail-bond and escape.
Jungle (n.) Any place except in a big city. Also "Bridgeport," used as meaning any jay town.
Junk (n.) Cocaine. (An addict is a "junky," or is "junked up.")

Keep the Nose Clean—Stay within the law or play honest with the outfit.
Kewey (adj.) Red-headed. (Kew Gardens, L. I., N. Y., enforces by ordinance a red roof on every building. This is a delicious and new gem of argot.)
Keyman (n.) See "Wire." A keyman in a racket is what a "wire" is in a pickpocket, "payoff," or badger operation.
Keyster (n.) A satchel or handbag of any kind.
Kick (n.) Shoe. (Also pocket.)
Kickback (n.) Payment of pro rata of loot; also unexpected and unfavorable result—boomerang.
Kick off (v.) To die.
Knockdown (n.) An introduction.
Knocking at the Door—Taking a dope cure.

Lam (v.) To escape. (Also, as adjective, "On the lam.")
Laugh off (v.) To ridicule or dismiss facetiously.
Laughing soup (n.) Champagne. (Var.: "Giggle water.")

Lay an Egg—To fail completely. (Var.: To pull a bloomer.)
Lay off (v.) To let alone. (Also to be out of work.)
Lay the Hip (v.) Smoke opium.
Left-handed Wife (n.) Kept woman.
Limey (n.) An English tough.
Line (n.) Meaning a system of conversation or action. "He had a hot line," "He slipped over a slick line," "What's your line?" etc.
Loud Speaker (n.) Wife.
Lousy (adj.) Anything or anyone contemptible or hateful.
Lowdown (n.) Reliable inside information of whatever character.
Lush-worker (n.) A low form of pickpocket specializing in robbing drunks.

Mac (n.) A man who lives off a woman's earnings, honest or nefarious ones. (Abbreviation of the French word, "macquero.")
Make (v.) To conquer or win. Usually applied to causing a woman to yield.
McCoy (the) (n.) The genuine article. (This is not a brand name. "Kid" McCoy, the cruel lightweight champion, now serving a life term for murder, was once introduced to a tipsy stranger, who refused to believe it was the champion and called him a liar. When they picked him out of a spittoon and brought him to, he rubbed his head and admitted "You're the real McCoy!" The phrase goes for any kind of commodity now from booze and dope to masterpieces and bonds.)
McGimp (n.) White Slaver.
Mickey Finn (n.) Knockout drops.
Mob (n.) A gang. (Var.: Outfit.)
Mobster (n.) Gangster.
Monicker (n.) A nickname.
Monkey (n.) Chinaman. (Var.: Mustard.)
Moocher (n.) Single-handed thief, usually of low caste. Also a snooper or spy.
Mope (v.) To walk.
Mosey (v.) To move slowly.
Mouthpiece (n.) A lawyer. (Var.: Legaler.)
Mug (v.) To photograph for the rogues' gallery.
Mugg (n.) A simpleton.
Muscle (v.) To force, by blackmail, threats, or violence, a gang into an interest in a business belonging to someone else. (Usually expressed "to muscle in.")

Mule (n.) Alcohol. (Var.: Alky.)
Mush (n.) Mouth. (Var.: "Kisser.")

Nail (v.) To catch.
Nance (n.) Effeminate man. (Var.: Fairy, pansy, faggot—the last often abbreviated to "fag.")
Natural (n.) A seven-year sentence. (The number in craps is called a "natural.")
Needle (v.) To inject a drug. Also to persecute or "ride."
Nip-up (v.) Raising a check.
Noodle (n.) Head. Nose wet. Drunk.
Norton-and-Egan (v.) To abuse, beat up. (Norton and Egan were two "front office dicks" who were so rough and cruel to those they worked on that their names became a by-word—and a verb.
Notch-joint (n.) House of ill fame.
Office (v.) To warn. (Instance: "He officed me to go easy because the bulls are on to the racket.")
Oilcan (n.) A disagreeable person, often applied to a stingy one.
Oke—(exc.) O.K., all right.
One-way-guy (n.) Honest man. (A crook is a "Two-way-guy.")
One-way Pockets—Any stingy person is described as having them—money goes in but never comes out; sometimes they say, "He has fish-hooks in his pockets."
On the Carpet—Being examined by a Chief of Detectives or prosecuting official.
On the Cuff—Living on credit.
On the Erie—A stool-pigeon.
On the Loose—Irresponsible, or out for a good time.
On the Make—Applied to a man seeking to win a girl or vice versa, and also to someone willing to get money by any method.
On the Nut—Loser on a venture. (Var.: In the box, or In the red.)
Out (adj.) Unconscious.
Out (n.) An escape. (Instance: "I've got an out on that rap.")
Overboard (adj.) Beyond the limit—too far gone to recover.

Pack (v.) To carry.
Pan (n.) Face. (Var.: Physog, map, mug.) (As a verb the word means to vilify.)
Paper hanger (n.) A forger.
Pass (n.) A gesture as though to strike a blow.

Pass out (v.) To become unconscious; sometimes stretched to mean to die.
Patriot (n.) Anyone who is sentimental rather than practical.
Pay-off (n.) The wire-tapping swindle. (Of late used to signify any outrageous or fool-captivating act. Sometimes applied to revenge, but then not genuine slang.)
Peanuts (n.) Small money.
Peep (v.) To talk.
Phoney (adj.) Spurious, specious, false.
Piece (n.) A share.
Pig (n.) A chorus girl.
Pigeon (n.) A girl who sits with the driver on the front seat of a rum-runner truck or beside the skipper of a rum-runner power-boat to give it the appearance of respectability and tranquillity.
Pineapple (n.) A small shrapnel bomb which can be held in one hand, the corrugated surface of which somewhat resembles the Hawaiian fruit.
Pipe off (v.) To watch or spy on.
Plant (n.) A hiding place; also any person placed anywhere under false pretenses and spurious identity.
Plant (v.) To purposely place damaging evidence in a pocket or cell or elsewhere; also to save or put away in a safe hiding place.
Plastered (adj.) Drunk. (Var.: Soused, grinnied, potted, cockeyed, stewed, shicker, woozy, boiled, lit, paralyzed, ossified.)
Play (n.) Overture or approach. (Instance: "He's making a play for her," or "He's making a play for more business.")
Play the field—To go after many chances and easy ones for small profits rather than concentrate on long shots for a big putover.
Plug (n.) Recommendation. (As a verb, to shoot.)
Poke (n.) Purse.
Produce (v.) To deliver, to make good.
Pulling a fast one—Coming suddenly through with an unexpected point or idea or doing the unforeseen at a critical juncture.
Pump (n.) Heart.
Punk (n.) A youth. (In prison slang, the word also means bread.)
Pushover (n.) Anything easy; also a girl who doesn't resist.
Puss (n.) Face.
Put it on the Line (v.) To pay in cash.

Put on the Spot—Lured or decoyed or betrayed to a place where one or more may be murdered with a degree of safety and favorable chances of getaway for the murderers as against being followed or "taken for a ride." Gangsters kill for business and not romance, and they plan their escape in advance.

Put the Finger On—To doom for and sentence to death by gang law.

Queer (n.) Counterfeit money. (Now applied also to spurious liquor.) (Also "degenerate.") (As a verb, to spoil or interfere with.)

Queer shover (n.) A passer of counterfeit money or securities.

Racket (n.) Any method of "muscling in" on a legitimate or illegal business, by force, threats, attack at the buying or selling end, connivance with authorities or with unions. (Origin: "Big Tim" Murphy, originator of the system and the phrase, stood at the Briggs House bar in Chicago. He was king of his field. "Umbrella Jim" Boyle, a small-fry emulator, came in. Boyle had just organized a minor union for purposes of a "shake." He pointed to a front-page article and boasted: "This is the Big Noise today!" Murphy glanced at it contemptuously and answered, "Big noise, Hell—that's just a racket!")

Rain-check (n.) A parole.

Rap (n.) A complaint or warrant making one subject to arrest and trial. ("To rap" is to lodge or cause same. "A bum rap" is a false charge. Being found not guilty or otherwise wiggling out is "Beating the rap.")

Rat (v.) To confess against brother gangsters or criminals. (The noun "rat" is similarly limited in significance and does not mean just a lowdown man—he must be a traitor to earn the label.)

Rattler (n.) A railroad train. Catching a train is "hopping a rattler."

Rattling the Tin Cup—Informing. (Origin: In most jails the space between bars is narrow and prisoners are provided with long, elliptical tin cups that can slip between them. When one of them wants water he rattles his cup between two bars to attract the guard. The guard comes to his cell. Thus he is known to have been close enough to a "screw" to tell him something, and if it soon turns out that someone has "squealed," the man who rattled the tin cup is suspected.)

Raw (adj.) Uncouth, bold, brazen.
Readers (n.) Marked cards.
Roughneck (n.) Hoodlum.
Ritz (v.) To treat haughtily. (Var.: To high-hat.)
Run (n.) Contest, battle. "We'll give him a run," meaning "We'll fight it out with him."
Runaround (n.) The practice of dodging someone persistently.

Sand (exc.) "Pull up" or "Go easy." (Its significance is "Put sand on the tracks.")
Sap (n.) A blackjack. (Also a boob.)
Savvy—Either noun or verb, meaning understanding. (From the Spanish, sabe.)
Sawbuck (n.) Ten dollars. (The X symbol is the origin of this whimsy. Twenty dollars is a "double sawbuck." These terms are the parents of the slang term "buck" for a dollar.)
Schmoos (n.) Talk, gab, conversation. (From the Yiddish.)
Scoff (v.) To eat.
Sconce (n.) Head. (Var.: Bean, dome, cocoa, block, noodle.)
Scooter (n.) A rum-running truck making long-distance hauls.
Scram (v.) To run away. (Var.: Lam, breeze, blow, beat it, take the gate, take air.)
Scratch (n.) Silver money. Probably a free variant of "chicken-feed."
Screw (n.) A prison-guard. Development of the old slang when a key was a screw.
See (v.) To interview and threaten or influence.
Set-up (n.) Synonomous with "layout," meaning a situation; also an easy mark (*see* "Pushover"); a term borrowed from billiards, where a set-up shot is easy compared to one "left" by an opponent haphazard or deliberately difficult.
Shake-down (v.) To blackmail. (Now often just "Shake.") (Var.: Rattle.)
Shammess (n.) A sheriff or constable. (Origin, Yiddish word for the village peace officer.)
Shapes (n.) Crooked dice. (Var.: Tats.)
Sharpshooter (n.) A thief who prepares, looks his ground over, trails his man, and blueprints his job—contrasted with the criminal of impulse or the devil-may-care operator who takes long chances both with his liberty and the risk of hazarding a long stretch for a crime which could not yield him much if he got away.

Shill (n.) A decoy who acts the victim to lure in a real victim. (Origin: Contraction of old English word, "shillaber.")
Shive (n.) A knife or dagger.
Shonacker (n.) Jew. (Var.: Kike, Yid.)
Shoot (exc.) Speak!
Shoot (n.) A drink of liquor. (Instance: "Pour me a shoot.")
Shoot the roll—Risk everything.
Shove (v.) To distribute. (The member of a gang who delivers bootleg is the shover.)
Showcase (n.) Hearse.
Silk (n.) A swindler.
Six-Two-and-Even—Square odds. (When a horse is listed at 6 to 1, he is 2 to 1 for place, or second position, and even money for show, or third.) When any odds are equitable, they are called "6, 2, and even."
Slant (v.) To watch, observe.
Slat (n.) A bar of a cell or prison.
Slap (n.) An accusation. Usually applied to a charge within a gang rather than to authorities, which is a "rap."
Sleigh-ride (n.) A cocaine orgy. (Cocaine is called "snow," and "reindeer dust.")
Slug (n.) A drink. Also a bullet. As a verb, to attack.
Slum (n.) Prison food. (Origin: "Slumgullion.")
Smear (v.) To bribe.
Smokey (n.) An opium addict. (Var.: Pipey.)
Snowbank (n.) A cocaine resort. (Cocaine is "snow.")
Sock (v.) To strike or hit. (Var.: Bust, wallop, bop, slam, punch.)
Soup (n.) Nitro-glycerin.
Sparrow-cop (n.) A park or boulevard policeman.
Spiel (n.) A routine speech for a purpose.
Spik (n.) A Spaniard, Cuban, or South American. (From "I no spik English.")
Spit up (v.) To confess. (Usually, "He spit up his guts.")
Split-case (adj.) Any deal involving less than twelve bottles. (Now used to describe anything or anybody qualified as a "piker.")
Split out (v.) To separate, usually by deliberate act, so that each can be beaten or killed or robbed separately.
Spring (v.) To release from custody.
Squawk (v.) To complain. (Var.: Belch, beef, belly-ache, bleat, yawp.)
Squeal (v.) To inform either the police or a rival gang.
Stall (n.) A member of a gang who interferes with or dis-

tracts an intended victim so the others can work more freely; also used as a verb, meaning to procrastinate or slow up.

Stanch (v.) To park or leave somewhere. (Instance: "I stanched the car around the corner," or "I had Bill stanched at the door, etc."

Stash (n.) Meeting place.

Steam up (v.) To anger or deliberately infuriate.

Step (v.) To move rapidly or do something unusual.

Stiegen (exc.) "Look out!" (Origin: German word, meaning "Be quiet!")

Stiff (n.) A corpse. (As a verb, drunk.)

Stir (n.) A penitentiary. At San Quentin, the largest "pen" in the world, it was the system to move the men about every month so they wouldn't get too chummy and couldn't conspire together. That was called "the stir." The institution became so known, and now any State prison is. (Var.: Big house.) (Sing Sing is "Up the River.")

Stooge (n.) A novitiate, a tyro, the word being a perversion of "student." (Var.: "Choir-boy"—origin of this, the stooge holds a flashlight while his superiors operate whatever they are at, and choir-boys hold candles. (Var.: Gay-cat.)

Stop Ticket (n.) A warrant awaiting a released convict.

Strapped—Broke, out of funds.

Stretch (n.) A penitentiary sentence. (Var.: bit.) A convict "does a stretch" or "gets a stretch" or, if he is acquitted, "beats a stretch." (Var.: Hitch.)

Strong (adj.) Crooked. An unfair gambling-house is a "strong joint."

Strong Arm (v.) To overcome a victim by crooking the arm around the front of his neck from behind, an almost unbreakable hold.

Sugar (n.) Money. (Var.: Kale, dough, jack, or the latest whimsy, "plenty pennies.") Also a pet name.

Sweeny—A mythical character typifying a fool. (Inst.: "Tell it to Sweeny," or, of a losing horse, "He ran for Sweeny." The antithesis is the famous Reilly of "Living the life of Reilly," meaning the best of everything.

Sweet Pea (n.) An easy victim or easy situation.

Tag (n.) Name.

Tail (v.) To follow.

Take (v.) To trim, hornswoggle, suckerize.

Take a runout powder—To abandon a project or partners or otherwise flee responsibilities or promises.

Take it—Ability to resist or stand punishment. One who gives in easily "Can't take it," and one who can survive hardships and blows and keep on going "can take it."

Take-joint (n.) A gyp cabaret or a gimmicked gambling-house.

Taken for a Ride—Lured or forced into an auto and driven out to a secluded or remote or otherwise potentially safe place for a getaway where the victim can be killed (*see* "Put on the Spot").

Tank (n.) Small town.

Tart (n.) A loose woman.

Taxi (n.) A 5-to-15 year sentence.

T. B. (n.) A confidence man. He was known as a "con," which is also the short for consumption, which is tuberculosis, for which the short is "T. B."

That boat has sailed—It's too late.

That way (adj.) In love. When telling it pretty, a man or woman is "That way in a big way."

The book (n.) A life sentence. (Var.: From now on.)

The goods (n.) Evidence; "getting the goods on—" means finding out things that will condemn or convict him.

The Works (n.) Everything complete or the limit of anything. (Var.: The Book. Also see "Book.")

There (adj.) Efficient. (Instance: "He's there forty ways," or "That proposition is there!")

Third rail (n.) An incorruptible official. (Origin: "You can't touch him.")

Tin star (n.) Private detective.

Tip-and-Toss (n.) Any swindling operation in which a "shill" or "capper" is employed.

Tip off (v.) To "wise up" or inform.

Tocker (n.) A murderer. The heart goes "tick, tock." The last it says is its final "tock." Therefore the murderer is the tocker.

Torch Song (n.) Lament over a woman. (Var.: Bleat, Singing the blues.)

Trick (n.) Any crooked enterprise. Usually said "turning a trick."

Trim (v.) To slug or beat up. A slugging or beating is a "trimming.")

Trim (v.) To swindle, "take," suckerize.

Trip (n.) A third conviction.

Turkey (n.) Irishman (Also the truth, as "We talked

turkey," or the unvarnished truth, "He told me, cold turkey.")

Turn copper—To give information to authorities.

Twist (n.) Girl. (Var.: Moll, broad, floozy, frail, chippy, jane, doll, skirt, number, mama.)

Two-time (v.) To play traitor to one (man or woman) while working or loving with another, unknown to the first.

Typewriter (n.) Machine gun. (Var.: Lawnmower.)

Up-and-up (adj.) Anything that is honest—strictly on the level. (Origin: Showing the hole-card in stud poker.)

Vag (v.) To arrest for vagrancy. (Instance: "I was vagged by the bulls.")

Vamp (v.) To leave.

Velvet (n.) Profit—something scarcely anticipated.

Washed up—Through, ready to quit.

Weazel (n.) A private detective. (Var.: Tin-star dick or Pink—the latter obviously an abbreviation of Pinkerton, but now applied to operatives of any aggressive agency.) Also "Eye."

Welch (v.) To run out on an agreement or withhold payment on a wager.

Whisper (n.) Speak-easy.

White (adj.) Trustworthy.

White-haired boy—A favorite.

Wild-wave Jockey (n.) A rum-runner who transports stuff by water.

William (n.) A bill of large denomination.

Wire (n.) The actual operator of a gang, such as the man who seizes the money in a pickpocket, stick-up, or burglary job.

Wired In—Fixed with the political powers.

Wise dough (n.) Money bet by insiders on a fixed race or game.

Wooden Kimono (n.) Coffin.

Wop (n.) An Italian. (Var.: Guinea, Greaseball, Dago.)

Wow (n.) Something extraordinary. (By the same token, the verb "to wow" means to astonish or highly impress.)

Yap (n.) A boob. (Var.: Spadie.)

Yard (n.) A hundred dollars. (Var.: Century.) A $100-bill is known as a C-note.

Yegg (n.) A bank robber.

Yellow-belly (n.) Coward.

Yen (n.) An intense craving or desire. (From the Chinese word "Yenhok," meaning a passion for opium.)
Yid (n.) Jew.

Zipper (v.) To shut something up, principally the mouth. (Instance: "Zipper your mush!")

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